

# How Revival Comes: The Desperation of the Saints

by Ronald Glass

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*Revival comes when God's people get desperate, acknowledging neglected priorities, returning to God's presence and preeminence, and admitting personal frailties.*

**Duration:** 1:03:19

**Scripture:** Genesis 31:1-32, Psalm 85:6, Habakkuk 3:2, Revelation 2:5

**Topics:** "Revival"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the four steps to experiencing revival. The first step is acknowledging neglected priorities, as seen in the story of Jacob encountering the angels of God. Jacob's strategies are dismantled, forcing him to abandon his cherished plans. The second step is meeting God in a life and death struggle for control over one's life. Jacob wrestles with God and is changed forever. The third step is facing past deficiencies, including reconciling with those we have hurt and making restitution. The fourth step is accepting and embracing the need for revival.

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## Transcript

Once again, as God revives his church, that is our subject of study in these weeks. We are looking at biblical revival. Today I bring you to the 32nd chapter of Genesis, Genesis chapter 32.

One of the things that has really been impressed upon me as I do this study, and this is not the first time I've studied this subject, first time I've preached on it here at this church, but as I've studied this subject, is just to see how many places in the Bible, and particularly in the Old Testament, revival is mentioned in one way or another. It is a pervasive subject in the scriptures, and we see it today all the way back into the book of Genesis. We will be looking at some verses, familiar verses in the book of Revelation.

From beginning to end, it is a book that has this thread all the way through it, and that is that God revives his people. And so today we come to the 32nd chapter of Genesis. You know, it's not very often that we encounter desperate people.

I mean really desperate people. We don't live in a culture where we have desperately hungry people or desperately poor people. We generally are not exposed to the violence of desperate people.

Perhaps you have met people who are desperate over an illness, perhaps their own or someone else's, a terminal illness for example, and they are desperate over that. But, unless you have had something like, for example, an accident, I can think of an accident, for example, a family driving down the freeway, and the car goes out of control and hits a guardrail and breaks into flames. The parents get out, but the children can't, and the parents stand screaming in desperation as they watch their children burn to death in that vehicle.

That's real desperation. Now, I can honestly say to you that I have never seen anyone who was desperately grieving over their sins. I know there have been people like that, but I have never really seen that.

And I have never truly seen a church that was desperate over their spiritual poverty. I've been privileged, and I may share this more in the future, but I've been privileged to be present when revival came to a couple of churches. But, I have never really seen a church that's desperate in their grief over sin.

Never, anywhere, at any time. And yet, as I read scripture, I see that spiritual awakening often came in response to sheer desperation. King Josiah is a good example.

If you know the story of Josiah, it's recorded in the latter chapters of 2 Chronicles. You remember that here was a young king who, at the age of 16, decided that he would clean up the temple, which had fallen into disrepair through disuse. And so he did so.

And as his people were cleaning the temple and rebuilding it, repairing it, they found a scroll. Josiah didn't even know that this existed. It was, of course, the scroll of the law of God.

And as they read it, he was so overwhelmed at the disobedience of his people, out of the sheer spiritual ignorance of a nation that had rejected the law of God for so long, that he tore his clothes, he went into a state of mourning, and initiated a whole series of reforms. Great revival there in the latter days of the southern kingdom. Last week we looked at Nineveh, an amazing story of a pagan city, of one of the greatest cities in the world at that time, a city to which a reluctant, disobedient Jewish prophet went and preached.

And the entire city turned to God. Clearly an act of God's sovereign grace. The thing that struck me about that, once again, was how the people acted and spoke in desperation.

They believed 40 days and Nineveh is destroyed. And as a result of that, knowing they had no time to sit around and think about it, they believed the prophet. They believed God.

They mourned over their sin. From the king to the cattle in the stalls, all of them dressed in sackcloth, sitting in ashes, and pleading with God for repentance. Now, we don't see that very often.

But that is my point to you today. See, at this point in our series, we're asking the question, how does revival come? We asked that question last time, and in our last study we discovered that revival is, above all, a product of the sovereignty of God. I called it the lesson of the fish, if you remember.

Repeatedly throughout the book of Jonah, we see that concept that salvation is of the Lord. That was the confession of Jonah in the belly of the fish. That was the confession of Jonah that finally resulted in him being vomited out of the fish's belly onto dry land.

And then he experienced it personally as he preached God's message to Nineveh. Salvation is of the Lord. So, the first answer to the question, how does revival come, is, and it is the most important answer, it is a work of the sovereignty of God.

Spiritual awakening is the work of the Almighty God, and specifically of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Sovereign Lord and Master Builder of the Church, who declared, all power or all authority is given to me in heaven and earth. He is building his church, he has all of the authority, and revival is firmly in his hands. But, this is not all that needs to be said about the origins of revival.

There is another answer to the question, how does revival come? And that other element appears conspicuously in the pages of Scripture. And, for a lack of a better way of saying it, it is the desperation of the saints. You see, sometimes the Lord has to bring us to the end of ourselves before we are ready to experience revival.

And today we are going to see just such a case. I am speaking, of course, of Jacob. You remember Jacob, he was the grandson of Abraham, the man with whom God made the great covenant that resulted in the Jewish nation.

He was the son of Isaac, he was the twin brother of Esau. Jacob, as you remember, who in a fit of his typical scheming, managed to secure from his brother the birthright and the right, therefore, to be the covenant patriarch in the ongoing line of Abraham, all for a bowl of lentil soup when Esau came in from hunting. That caused a deep rift between the two brothers.

It also eventuated in a decision on the part, particularly of his mother, and also of his father, to send him away to Laban, his uncle, in the area of Aramea in Syria, in order that he might escape the wrath of Esau. Jacob, as you read his story, has an unusual ability to manipulate and cheat other people. And his shrewdness led to a confident self-reliance.

That is the distinguishing mark of Jacob. By the way, Jacob's name actually means that. It means schemer or cheat.

And that's what he was, remarkably self-reliant. I want to say to you today that self-reliance and the sin that breeds it are sufficient to choke our spiritual lives. Biblical Christianity, spiritual life, is all about trusting God.

It is all about denying of self. And when we are sufficient in and of ourselves, if we are ever going to experience the blessing of revival, we must be purged of the poison of self-absorption, of self-confidence, and of self-sufficiency. In revival, we meet God in a fresh new way.

Jacob did, and so will we. But first, we have to need him. Let me say it even more.

We need to need him. And that's the secret here. Revival comes when God's people get desperate.

Desperation. Now, this dynamic, and we see a desperate man here, involves four progressive steps. They underlie this story, and I want to share them with you because I believe these things were written not just as a nice story about a man who lived long ago, but rather these things were written, as Scripture tells us, for our learning, for our spiritual edification, I believe, for our good as a church in the 21st century.

So let's look at these four steps to awakening here in this passage. Let's begin in verses 1 and 2 where we note that revival comes when we are forced to acknowledge our neglected priorities. Did you notice, as Jacob went on his way, the angels of God met him? And God said when he saw them, or Jacob said when he saw them, this is God's camp.

So he named the place Mahanaim. And Mahanaim means two camps, the camp of the angels and the camp of the people. I want to say to you right at the outset, by definition, revival entails a return, a going back to something which we had left.

It means reclaiming a life which we once had, but we have let slip away from us. We have abandoned. We have neglected.

Revival presupposes the neglect and then the resurrection of our spiritual priorities. That's why we as a people need to be awakened. That's why we need revival in these days, is because for so many of us our spiritual priorities have been set aside in the interest of other priorities that have crowded them out.

Now I want you to notice the dynamic here as Jacob has to acknowledge his neglected priorities. And we with him, first of all, we must return to the place of God's presence. You see, as a result of sin, Jacob had left the place of God's presence.

Turn back with me for a moment to the 28th chapter and we see what happened. This is when Jacob now is fleeing. He's leaving home.

20 years earlier, verse 10 of chapter 28, Jacob departed from Beersheba and he went back toward Haran, up north in Syria. And he came to a certain place and he spent the night there because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of the place and he put it under his head and he lay down in that place.

And he had a dream and behold a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven. And behold the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And behold the Lord stood above it and said, I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham, the God of Isaac, the land on which you lie.

I will give it to you and to your descendants. Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Behold, I am with you.

I will keep you wherever you go. I will bring you back to this land for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you. Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, now notice this, verse 16, surely the Lord is in this place.

And I did not know it. He was afraid and he said, how awesome is this place. This is none other than the house of God.

And this is the gate of heaven. The stairs up and down. The gate of heaven.

Angels coming and going into the heavens. So Jacob rose early in the morning. And what did he do? Build a tabernacle there? Decide, Lord, you're here.

I'm going to build my house here and live here. No. He took the stone that he had put under his head.

He set it up on a pillar. He poured oil on its top. He called the name of the place Bethel, which means house of God.

However previously the name of the city had been Luz, then Jacob made a vow saying, if God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take and will give me food to eat and garments to wear and I return to my father's house in safety, then the Lord will be my God. Look at that. There's Jacob, the schemer, the conniver.

Jacob is making a deal with God. This stone, which I've set up as a pillar, will be God's house. Notice that's in the future tense.

And of all that you give me, I will surely give a tenth to you. I'll be real generous with God if He'll do what I say. You see what Jacob did? Here God manifested Himself.

As Jacob is running away from his home and he's going up to Uncle Laban up in Syria, what he does is on the borders of Canaan, the land that God had promised to his fathers, to Abraham, on the border, as he leaves, God reveals Himself. God says, here I am. Here is the place where I manifest my presence.

Here's the ladder, the stairway to heaven, up and down, angels. God is in this place. And what does He do? Pours oil on a rock, says, surely this is Bethel, this is the house of God, but bye-bye God, I'm going to leave for a while, but if you'll bring me back, if you'll let me return to my father in safety, then this place that I've set up, this will be your house, and I'll give you a tenth of everything.

That's so characteristically Jacob. Strike a deal with God. But you see, what he did is he left the place of God's presence.

God was very gracious. He said, I'm going to go with you. I'm going to stick with you wherever you go, Jacob, and I'm going to bring you back here.

But Jacob could have trusted God. Jacob could have stayed right there in the land where God manifested His presence. Now, life had been difficult until at last Jacob listened to the Lord.

For twenty years in the service of Laban, Laban was the one guy who was a match for Jacob. He was a schemer, too. He was a cheat, too.

And the two of them, wow, they really enjoyed life together, as you can imagine. Now, it got to a point where they couldn't stand it. Jacob couldn't stand living there any longer.

And Jacob, now with two wives, they said, there's no reason for us to stay. But here's what happened. Look in the 31st chapter now.

Genesis chapter 31, verse 13. God appears and He says, hey, remember me? I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar, where you made a vow to me. Now, arise, leave this land, and return to the land of your birth.

It's time for you to get back where you belong. So Jacob returns to the place of God's blessing, and the Lord, as we read the account in that 31st chapter, the Lord is there to meet him. In fact, right here in the opening verse of chapter 32, when Jacob went on his way, the angels of God met him.

He should have never left in the first place. As he comes back, just as he had left, the angels of God are there. We need to return to the place of God's presence in our lives, and in our church.

We need to quit wandering away from God. We need to realize that God is with us. He has promised never to leave us or forsake us, so why do we choose the world? We must return to the place of God's presence.

Secondly, we must return to the place of God's preeminence. Everything that has preempted the Lord in our lives has to be forfeited. I don't think Jacob really understood how bad things had gotten in Paddan Aram, up in Syria.

Here's how bad things had gotten. Look back in chapter 31 again, and verse 19. When Laban had gone to shear his flock, then Rachel, that's one of Jacob's wives, stole the household idols that were her father's.

See, she hid them in her saddlebags, and when Laban showed up and said, where are my idols? That's interesting, because Jacob was living with Laban, who was worshipping idols. Verse 32, Jacob said to Laban, the one with whom you shall find your God shall not live in the presence of our kinsmen. Point out what is yours among my belongings, and take it for yourself.

Notice the last statement, for Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them. Jacob didn't even know that his own favorite wife was a secret idol worshipper. That's not what you would expect for a man that God said he would bless.

He had to get back to a place of God's preeminence. He had to purge the idols out of his house. Jacob would later tell his family, get rid of your idols.

Jacob returns to the place where he can enjoy the full blessing of God. You see, revival always begins by coming back to the place of God's presence and preeminence. It means humbly seeking God's face and repentance.

It means sacrificing every undesirable influence in our lives and finding restored fellowship with God. Revival is not something that we find much in the New Testament, but as I pointed out to you, and I don't apologize for coming back to these passages, the letters to the seven churches in the book of Revelation, four of those letters in particular, are urgently commanding churches to repent. Let me remind you again of the church in Ephesus.

Revelation chapter 2, verses 4 and 5, but I have this against you, says the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of the church. You who are such a faithful church in terms of your doctrinal stability, the fact that you will not tolerate evil, that you are, your teaching is correct, you've got all of your T's crossed, your I's dotted properly, but I have this against you that you have left your first love. Therefore, remember from where you have fallen and repent and do the deed you did at first or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place unless you repent.

This was one of the great churches of the day by then. It became the leading church eventually, the church at Ephesus. You would look at that church and you would say, here's a church that's busy, active, probably a church that is growing.

Here is a church that is orthodox to the T. And God says, you've left your first love. Remember from where you have fallen and repent and do the deeds you did at first. That's the decision Jacob had to face.

And it's the decision the church of Jesus Christ is facing today. Chapter 3. And the message to the church at Sardis, to the angel of the church at Sardis, verse 1. He who has the seven spirits of God, the seven stars, says this, that's the Lord Jesus, I know your deeds, that you have a name, that you are alive, but you are dead. Wake up! And strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die, for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of my God.

They needed an awakening. Wake up. My friends, today the evangelical church in America is an idolatrous church.

We have so many things that have crept into our lives as individuals, families, and church families that have nothing to do with the presence or the preeminence of God. We have become idolaters, putting other things ahead of God in our lives and our families. It is time that we root out the worldliness, the idols that we don't even know are there as they are exposed to get rid of these things in our lives and get rid of these things in our church.

Because revival comes when we are forced to acknowledge our neglected priorities. We have left the place of God's presence and we have left the place of God's preeminence. Secondly, revival comes when we are forced to admit our personal frailties.

Now we're back in Genesis 32, verses 3-12. Jacob, who has never lacked self-assurance, Jacob, who has always been self-reliant, Jacob is reduced to helpless terror. And that's right where God wants him.

Now here's the thing that I want to stress to you at this point. There is no revival as long as we're relying on ourselves. That's the problem that we face today.

So when we are forced to admit our personal frailties, what happens? Well, first of all, our self-defense crumbles. That's what we see here in verses 3-8. What happens? They come into this land.

God is there. He actually sees these angels. He feels at home now.

God has met him. The angels form one camp and he has another camp and he feels very protected. So Jacob sends messengers to approach Esau.

Figures by this time Esau's not mad at him any longer, but as a matter of courtesy, I better go and tell Esau that I'm coming through. Jacob has always been able to connive his way out of his troubles, but not now. His fraudulent generosity has no effect on Esau.

Did you notice that? He says, when you go see Esau, I want you to say to him, look, I've got oxen and donkeys and flocks and male and female servants I've sent to tell my Lord, look, I'm a rich man. I've got all this stuff and I'm coming through. Thinking that hopefully by this time Esau will welcome him with open arms.

Sure, Jacob. Let's let bygones be bygones and let's hug and make up and let's live together. So his men go and they do that and then they come back and they said we came to your brother Esau alright and furthermore, he's coming to meet you.

Good, says Jacob. We're going to have a great reunion. And he's got 400 men with him.

Uh oh. Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed. Jacob's hope is gone and what happens? Fear and panic take over.

That's what he means. Afraid and distressed. He's afraid.

He's full of fear and he panics. What does he do? Good old Jacob. He hatches another plot.

What does he do? He divides the people who were with him and the flocks and the herds and the camels into two companies. And he said, if Esau comes to the one company and attacks it, then the company which is left will escape. He's plotting his salvation once again.

He's going to save himself by his own efforts. That sounds like religion, doesn't it? That sounds like most human religions. Self salvation.

But you see, when the church is revived, the first thing that happens is our self defense crumbles. The second thing that happens, our confidence crumbles. We see this in verses 9 through 12.

For the first time in his life, Jacob seems to have run out of ideas. No more scheming. No more cheating.

Jacob is forced to his knees and that is exactly where God wants him. What does Jacob do here? He turns to prayer. By the way, that's usually the last thing on our agenda when it comes to the church.

How do I know? Show up some Wednesday evening here and see how full these pews are. You can usually put us all in about one or two pews. That's how much we care about praying.

And that is better than some churches who've canceled prayer meeting altogether. They don't even have it anymore. Why? Lack of interest.

Lack of commitment. Nobody comes. It's the last thing on our agenda until we get desperate.

Then we decide we're going to pray. You see, revival is not going to come until we feel the utter poverty of our own sinful souls. And as a church, as an evangelical church in America today, until we feel the poverty of our training and our knowledge and our ideas and our initiatives, our strategies, our financial, technical, and facility resources, until we feel the poverty of our leadership skills and our ministry teams or whatever else we offer, until we feel the worthlessness of all of that, we will never be revived.

And we will never be driven to prayer. We have so organized and trained and prepared and built and financed our programs in our churches today that we don't need God. May I just say something here? Sometimes, I think it's very easy for churches to overlook the value of church splits.

I hear stories all the time. I heard more this week. Met a pastor I never met before.

Had him in our home for dinner from down south. Never met the man before. Called me up this week.

We had dinner together Thursday night. Talking about his little church down the country, regions of South Carolina. How many splits they've had down there.

Happens all the time. Church is split. Go out and start a new church.

Why does God allow that? Why would the Lord of the church who said, I will build my church, why does he allow church splits? I think we miss the value. We complain. We wring our hands.

In many cases, we go off down the road and start another church because people are mad at each other and can't get along with each other. Why does Jesus do it? I think he does it in order to bring us to our

knees. Why or how? By showing us the poverty of our own resources.

Now you don't have so much money. Now you don't have so many people, so many workers. Now you don't have what you had before.

Now you can't go on and do all this in the power of your strength. If you're going to accomplish anything for God, you have to come to God and cry out to him and say, Lord Jesus, we can't do it anymore. If it's going to happen, you've got to make it happen.

That's revival. When we come back to God and say, Lord, after all, this is your church. And this is where modern evangelicalism is failing and failing miserably.

What are we saying when we speak about our methods and our strategies? Constantly holding conferences and seminars and writing books and producing DVDs and all kinds of programs that are geared to build the church. What are we saying when we speak about these methods and strategies? What are we doing when we look to our secular business models to run our churches and evangelize our communities, which is what is going on today? What are we saying when we obsess over leadership? I tell you what it says. We are placing our confidence in the talents and schemes of men, and often, I'm afraid to say, godless men at that.

Revival comes when we are forced to admit our personal frailties. We can't do it. Jacob, you can't beat Esau.

He's got 400 armed men. How are you going to stand up against that? Jacob finally understands. Well, he remembers.

God said way back there at Bethel, 20 years before, I'll be with you. I'm going to bring you back here. I'm going to be with you every place you go.

Alright, God, I guess I'll go back and cash in those favors. He's lived 20 years without God in that way. 20 years making his own way.

20 years with his own good ideas. Now he's forced to come back to God. Let me come to the third step.

Revival comes when we're forced to accept our past deficiencies. This is verses 13 through 23. Notice, so he spent the night there.

After praying, and praying in a very passionate way, I am unworthy of all the loving kindness and of all the faithfulness which you've shown to your servant, for with my staff only I cross this Jordan. Now I've become two companies. Verse 10, you see, now deliver me, Lord.

I'm unworthy. Yes, you are. And that's where you have to come to that point.

Realize that. But in response to this prayer of desperation, the Lord opens Jacob's eyes to some unfinished business. Jacob spent the night there, and as he was sitting there in his tent, waiting to pass over that little brook, the brook Jabbok, which he renames Peniel, waiting to pass over and encounter Esau, Jacob is thinking, I don't think he slept well that night.

He's tossing around ideas in his mind, and God is working in his mind. And what he remembers is, I've got unfinished business to do with Esau. You see, Jacob thought he was just going to walk in to Esau's

territory, and sort of, well, Esau, here I am.

Aren't you lucky? Now Jacob realizes, I can't go back there without finishing some unfinished business. Now let me give you the principles here. Two of them.

The Lord will not give revival where reconciliation is lacking. Jacob has unattended fences to which he must attend before he can enter into the fullness of God's blessing. Twenty plus years before he had wronged his brother.

Wait a minute, you said Esau gave up his birthright. Yes he did, but don't you remember this? Don't you remember the incident where Jacob with the help of his mother put animal skins on his arms and the clothing of Esau so that he smelled like Esau, so that his, for all practical purposes, blind father could not tell which son it was. He deceived his father.

That's what made Esau so mad. He got the blessing, and Esau had no blessing. Now he has wronged his brother.

He takes decisive action to make reconciliation with Esau. He selected from what he had with him for a present for his brother, and in the following verses we find that he begins the process of making reconciliation. Even in the previous verses, I don't know if you noticed this, but notice how he spoke to Esau.

He told his servants to speak to Esau. When you go back there to verse four, thus you shall say to my Lord Esau, my Master Esau. Thus says your servant Jacob, I have oxen and donkeys, male and female servants, and I have sent to tell my Lord that I may find favor in your sight.

He's humble now, more humble than he used to be. The Lord will not give revival where reconciliation is lacking. The other thing I would note here is that the Lord will not give revival where restitution is lacking.

Jacob chooses about 550 animals from his herd in order that he might make amends with Esau and gain safe passage into Canaan. If you look at verse 20, you will see that it says in our translation, I will appease him. Literally the Hebrew term here is I will cover his face so that he doesn't see the sin of the past anymore.

I want to cover his face. And the meaning of that word really is to make amends or reconcile. And what he's doing is he's doing, he's making restitution.

What Jacob does here in giving these animals to Esau is demonstrate his repentance for offenses committed 20 years earlier. Now, this is a token repayment for what he had stolen, namely the birthright. But once again, and I've said this before, I'll have occasion to say it again.

I want you to get this very firmly ingrained in your minds. One of the marks of genuine revival when it has taken place throughout the history of the Christian church is reconciliation and restitution. Where believers who have been at odds with each other reconcile.

And where when there has been wrong committed and others have suffered, where believers have been deprived of something, where restitution is needed, restitution is made. Over and over again. I was listening to that interview that I recommended last week and I still recommend for you to listen to the interview with Pastor Bill McCloud who was at the center of the Canadian revival in 1971.

And he says in that interview one of the most distinctive marks of that revival was the amount of restitution that went on. People making things right from long time ago. Paying old debts.

Making things right. Are there unsettled accounts in your life? We were singing earlier in our service have thine own way Lord. While his own way is reconciliation and restitution as much as lies within you.

Unpaid debts. People whom you have injured and from whom you are still alienated. Are there fences that need to be mended? Then you must face your past deficiencies and through reconciliation and through restitution wipe the slate clean or you will never experience the fullness of revival blessing.

Do you see the order? Jacob prays to God. I'm unworthy. Lord deliver me.

As we're going to see in a moment Jacob has a personal encounter with God but the first thing that has to happen before that is he has to get right with Esau. Revival comes when we are forced to accept our past deficiencies. Now let me come to the fourth step.

Revival comes when we are forced to abandon our cherished strategies. Verses 24-32 Before Jacob can meet Esau one other thing has to happen. Jacob has to meet God.

What follows is a life and death struggle for control over Jacob's life. There is one fundamental question that is being answered in these verses and that is who is going to be the master of Jacob's life? Who's going to call the shots? And what we have in this encounter is more than just praying. It is a crisis struggle of a lifetime of a man who has lived a self-sufficient life an arrogant life a life of abusing other people.

He has done all of that and God now brings him to the end of himself and changes Jacob forever. Now it's an amazing story. God gets into a wrestling match with a stubborn man and the man wrestles God to a standoff.

I can guarantee you that's not because God didn't have the power. That's because God let himself be wrestled to a standoff. Let me show you three things here.

First of all and this shows us how we have to deal with our own lives. Our strategies must be dismantled. Verse 24.

Jacob was left alone and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. Do you understand what goes on here? Jacob has developed a plan. He is going to send across and he already has.

He sent across the brook. He's got groups and each one is prepared to encounter Esau. Esau comes to the first one.

Jacob's behind you. Okay. Comes to the second one.

Jacob's back there. Okay. Comes to the third one.

Jacob. And he gives Esau a lot of time to get used to the idea that Jacob is back there. He's going to do this.

This is his plan. So he sent everybody across the brook and he's the last one left who hasn't crossed over. And now since everybody's gone, everything's packed up.

The camp's all dismantled. They're ready to go. Jacob now is ready to cross the brook.

And as he attempts to do it, as he walks to the bank of that little brook to cross over, all of a sudden out of the shadows, a mysterious man appears who blocks his path. You can just hear it. Let me go.

Let me move over. Move over. I'm going across.

The man just stands in his way until Jacob gets so frustrated that he gets into a shoving match with this guy. Get out of here. My family's over here.

I'm crossing the brook. We're heading south down to see Esau. No you're not.

And they get into a fight. Jacob is determined to get over the brook and deal with Esau according to his own plan, but the mysterious man says no you won't. But Jacob won't give up.

It must have been a pathetic sight. We're not told this here, but we have a little additional insight in the book of Hosea. Chapter 12, verse 4. Listen to these words.

Yes, he wrestled with the angel and prevailed. He wept and sought his favor. Jacob was struggling with this man.

He was in tears. He was pleading with him to get out of his way and let him go. What a pathetic sight.

Now you see when we think that we can live our way and do ministry by our own strategies, when we neglect doing things God's way, he is perfectly capable of stopping us in our tracks and saying no you don't. That's true in your life. That's true in our church.

We may fight against him and sometimes, and this is the amazing thing, it looks like we're winning. What you can point to churches that have used nothing but worldly business techniques in building their church and they're packed out on Sunday morning. Five services all full.

Looks like they're winning, right? There comes a point when the Lord steps in. Because in order to be revived, in order for us to experience awakening, our strategies have to be dismantled. All our good ideas have to be smashed to pieces.

Secondly, our strength must be disabled. Notice verse 25. When he saw that he had not prevailed against him.

Now that's God. That's the man who we find out is the angel of the Lord. This is none other, believe it or not, this is none other than the second person of the triune Godhead.

This is the Lord Jesus before his incarnation. When he saw that he had not prevailed against him, of his own choice of course, that they had wrestled to a standoff, and this is till daybreak. This fight went on for a long time.

He touched the socket of his thigh. So the socket of Jacob's thigh was dislocated while he wrestled with him, just in case there was any question as to who this is. All he had to do was touch his thigh and the socket was dislocated.

God must destroy our abilities. Jacob's will is still opposed to God's will. He's fighting God.

And the Lord therefore shows Jacob that he will do God's work God's way. And God is saying, my way is not to do what you're doing, the way you're doing it. And so with one blow, the Lord dislocates Jacob's hip

and with it, there goes Jacob's self-reliance.

He can't even walk right anymore. And Jacob learns that God's blessing comes not by his effort, but by God's grace. It is not by might.

It is not by power, God said to Zechariah, but it is by my spirit, says the God. And revival comes with scars, with pain. Our strategies must be dismantled.

Our strength must be disabled. Thirdly, our struggle must be discarded. 26 verse down to the end.

Finally, God has to destroy our pitiful efforts to outmaneuver him. Jacob knows that he's now vulnerable. He's been fighting this man for hours.

The man has touched his hip. Now he can't walk right. He's lame.

He can't continue the fight. So what does he do? Lay down and give up? No. Jacob does the smart thing here.

Perhaps by this time, it's begun to dawn on him who it is he's wrestling with, because he may have remembered a story of his grandfather Abraham. One day, God in the person looking like a human being, a man, came to his tent to have dinner with Abraham. Maybe Jacob is saying, this may not be a man.

This may be God. He does the only thing that he can do. He gives up struggling and he clings.

He grabs on. God says to him, let me go for the dawn is breaking. But he said, I will not let you go unless you bless me.

It's a principle that the apostle Paul emphasizes in his second Corinthians chapter 12 that the weaker we are, the more firmly we cling. Paul said, after he had prayed to the Lord three times for his thorn in the flesh to be taken away, he said to me, my grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness. Ladies and gentlemen, when we pray for revival, we are praying for a new infusion of power in the church in order to touch the world for Jesus Christ.

But power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore, I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties for Christ's sake.

For when I am weak, then I am strong. That verse is a marvelous description of the church of Jesus Christ in the last 2,000 years in its time of greatest power. It has been a persecuted church.

It has been a church with tremendous disadvantages in the world, but a church that just clung to the power of God. Yes, as Jacob clings, he prays one of the shortest and most eloquent prayers of desperation anywhere in the Bible. I will not let you go unless you bless me.

Jacob now comes to the point of humble confession. What is God's response? What is your name? My name is Jacob. My name is Schemer.

My name is Cheat. He said, Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel. Israel means he strives with God.

Isn't that a much better name? Instead of Cheat, self-reliant, conniving, dishonest cheater, your name is going now to be He strives. You have striven with God and with men and you prevail. God let him prevail.

Oh, the wonderful thing about it is, ladies and gentlemen, when you get serious with God and you strive with Him in prayer, how many times He lets us prevail. Jacob asked Him, and said, Well, fair's fair. You want to know my name? What's your name? But He said, Why is it that you ask my name? Why did He answer that way? I'll tell you why.

Because that name had not been revealed yet. One day it would. You shall call His name Jesus.

Hadn't been revealed yet. So God doesn't answer His question. He does something much better.

He blessed Him. And Jacob knows that he has come face to face with God. Verse 30, Jacob named the place Peniel for he said, I have seen God face to face.

Peniel means the face of God. And my life has been preserved. When you put all of this together, you have the picture of one very desperate, stubborn man.

He needs revival. He needs awakening. But he's not in the place yet to receive that awakening.

Jacob is going to be used by God. No question. But not yet.

And for that reason, the Lord struggles with him. Subjects him to a struggle like no other struggle he ever had. At this point, on the banks of that little brook Jabbok, in the middle of that night, Jacob had a fight like no other in his life.

Jacob met a match that was too great for him. At first, the Lord seems to come to a standoff. But listen, as always happens, in the end, he wins.

Because Jacob has come face to face with God. Now, he can go face to face with Esau. As the sun rose the next morning, a new day dawned in Jacob's life.

Verse 31, the sun rose upon him just as he was crossing over Peniel. And look at this. He was limping on his thigh.

From that day, Jacob, for the rest of his life, bore the mark of that struggle. Every time Jacob took a step, he was reminded that there was a day when he wrestled with God. That there was a day when Jacob, the cheap, became Israel, the one who strives with God.

There was a day when Jacob... Here's the lesson. Here's what I want you to remember. Jacob had to be broken in the place of desperation.

I will not let you go unless you bless me. You've hurt me. Now bless me.

This is one of the greatest truths of all biblical revival. Brokenness leads to blessing. You read the literature on historic revivals throughout the church age, and one of the themes that keeps coming up over and over again is this of brokenness.

Brokenness means we come to a place of desperation. That's the place of persevering prayer. We sang it today.

Oh, wind of God, come bend us, break us till humbly we confess our need. Then in tenderness remake us. Revive.

Restore. For this we plead. Let's think about ourselves for a moment.

With this I close today. We look back in the history of our church in the past year and God has broken us. And I don't believe that God broke us for nothing.

God has purposes. For months and months we have prayed, Lord, you be the sovereign builder of this church. Okay.

Wading River Baptist Church, we'll call you Wading River Jacob Church. You want me to build? Then you've got to do it my way. We've reached the end of ourselves to points at which we have said repeatedly, we can't do this.

I think that's where God wanted us. We said, we can't have VBS this year. And God said, no.

Not if you're going to do it like you've done it before. But I have a plan. And this week we have VBS.

God did that. He brought people to the fore. He laid it upon the hearts of people who said, I will volunteer to do this or that.

We didn't go out recruiting. We asked a few people here and there. But it was God who moved on the hearts of people.

And we've said this in other respects. We can wring our hands and say, how can we afford to go on? And about the time we've gone to despair over that, God brought the resources to us. God said, you do it my way.

You know, it's much better to do it that way than to wrestle with God. In some ways we've come to the place of desperation where we can't struggle any longer. I feel we've come to a point where we can only just cling.

In weakness, Lord, show us your strength. Make us strong as we're weak that you might be glorified. Have we come to a point of desperation? Well, no, I don't think so.

Not really. Like all of the churches in America, I don't think any of us have come to a point of desperation. But I want you to tuck this sermon away in your head.

I want you to put it in your mental computer memory. Someday, if in the pleasure of God the church becomes persecuted and things really do get tough, remember then God breaks us and then remakes us in the place of desperation. We cannot struggle any longer.

We can only cling. I believe, brothers and sisters, that we are standing on the banks of our penile. A few weeks ago, I asked you to pray frequently throughout your week.

Will you, not yourself, revive us again that your people may rejoice in you? I ask you to pray from Habakkuk 3. Lord, in the midst of wrath, remember mercy. Revive your work. Now, here's another one.

I'm going to ask you to pray. You and I, constantly, throughout your day, as it comes to mind, you don't need to get on your knees in a quiet place. Right where you are, whatever you're doing, here's what you

pray.

We will not let you go. We will not let you go unless you bless us. You've crippled us.

Now bless us. All self-consume, all sin destroy. With earnest zeal, endue each waiting heart to work for you.

O Lord, our faith renew. Speak, Lord, before your throne we wait your promise to believe. And we'll not let you go until the blessing we receive.

O Lord, will you, not yourself, revive us again that your people may rejoice in you? O Lord, revive your work in the midst of the years. In wrath, remember mercy. O Lord, we will not let you go unless you bless us.

Father, like Jacob, so many millennia ago, may we see that it's useless to fight you. Rather, may we cling. And in our weakness, show yourself to be strong.

O Lord, Jesus, bless us in this community. Bless us, Father, with awakening of spiritual life, repentance of our sins, reconciliation with brethren, restitution for those we've wronged, prayer, earnest prayer for awakening, and the power, O the power, to touch our world for Jesus Christ. Even this week, Lord, we're asking you to bless our VBS.

O God, not our wisdom, not our ingenuity, not our good planning, your power. Yes, continue the process of breaking and bending us until humbly we confess our need. And then in your tenderness remake us.

O Lord, revive us, restore us. For this we plead in Jesus' name.

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