



Turning Point

Genesis 32:1-32

Turning Point

Begin with prayer

Read: Genesis 32:1-32

Listen: THRU the BIBLE: [Genesis 32:1-32](#)

Dear God,

We invite You into this moment of reflection. Help us to stop striving in our own strength and to yield fully to You. Teach us that true victory comes not from wrestling but from clinging to You in humble surrender.

Amen.



Turning Point in Jacob's Relationship with God



Genesis 32

When Jacob reflected on his life as an old man, he remembered this time as **his life's highest point - a turning point in his relationship with God**. Up until now, Jacob didn't really act like God's man. He had been such a poor witness that the world would never have recognized him as a follower of God.

God had to discipline him in order to get Jacob's heart (Hebrews 12:6). It took Jacob 20 years to learn, and he certainly worked for it.

Now Jacob was going to represent God. So God began to deal with him directly in order to bring him **into the place of fruit-bearing, and of true service and witness for Him**.

Jacob's Fear of Meeting His Brother Esau

On his way back to the Promised Land, **Jacob met angels**. He must have recognized who they were from his earlier meeting in Bethel. As he crossed the border into his home country, he knew he would soon meet his brother Esau.

He remembered the last time he saw Esau 20 years ago. Esau was so angry with him. So this time, Jacob sent messengers in front of him and instructed them to say, **"When you get to Esau, my brother, say to him, 'My lord Esau. Refer to me as 'your servant, Jacob.'"** Jacob has clearly changed his attitude. **He had manipulated his way for the birthright and had stolen Esau's blessing**. Jacob had been a rascal, but now his words are different. Perhaps he had learned some hard lessons from Laban.

The messengers returned to Jacob, saying, **"We met your brother, Esau, and he's coming to meet you along with four hundred men."**

Now **Jacob was terrified**, because he didn't know Esau's intent. He may have questioned his servants, "Did he seem upset? Or bitter or hateful toward me?" Even if they said, "No, he seemed glad you were coming," in Jacob's imagination, that could have meant that **Esau was glad for an opportunity for revenge**. Jacob was upset. Since he thought **he was in danger, he divided his group into two and sent them in different directions so that if his brother struck one group, then the other could escape**. Then he showed signs of a different way of thinking.



We take our burdens to the Lord in prayer. Then when we get through praying, we put each burden right back on our back and start out again with them.

Jacob Seeks God for Help

Jacob asks God for help in his distress.

Jacob said, “O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the LORD who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you’: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant; for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two companies. Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me, and the mother with the children. For You said, ‘I will surely treat you well, and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.’” (Genesis 32:9-12)

Jacob cried out to God because **He is the God of his father Abraham and the God of his father Isaac**. For the first time, he says, “**I am not worthy of the least of Your mercies.**”

For the first time, **he acknowledged that he is a sinner in God's sight**. When any person **begins to move toward God in this way**, God will **communicate with them**.

Jacob's Plans to Pacify Esau

Jacob had a rough night. He strategized how to pacify Esau. He planned to **send a very generous gift of livestock, goats, sheep, camels, bulls, donkeys**—divided into three sections. When Esau would ride towards Jacob, he would encounter the first one, and the servant would say, “**We are bringing you a gift from your brother, Jacob.**” Then Esau would ride on a little farther and meet the second herd, and then later, a third. **By then, Jacob hoped that Esau's hatred would be softened.**

Jacob sent all that he owned and all his family across the brook Jabbok, but **he stayed on the other side** so that if his brother Esau came, he might kill Jacob but would spare his family.

When Jacob prayed, he reminded the Lord, “**You told me to return to my country. You said You would protect me.**” But did he believe God? No. He made all these arrangements, **which revealed he wasn't trusting God at all**. We often take the same position. We might take our burdens to the Lord in prayer. **Then when we get through praying, we put each burden right back on our back** and start out again with them. **We don't really believe Him, do we? We don't really trust Him as we should.**



Consequences of Jacob's Poor Choices

Jacob had come to terms with his life's poor choices, and it filled him with fear and doubt. He had mistreated Esau. God had never told him to get the birthright or the blessing in the way he did. God would have gotten it for him. And so now, Jacob was left waiting alone.

But Jacob wasn't alone. Laban was behind him and his brother Esau ahead of him. Jacob was no match for either one. He was now caught in a dilemma, and he didn't know which way to turn. That night he was alone because he wanted to be alone, and he wasn't looking for a fight.

Who Wrestled with Jacob?

Now, we're told **Jacob encountered a Man who wrestled with him all night**. He was not going to give up easily. Who is this one who wrestled with Jacob that night? **It was none other than the preincarnate Christ.** (See also *Hosea 12:1-5* for more descriptions of this night.)

Here's how the night went. "Then Jacob was left alone, and **a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day**. Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, **He touched the socket of his hip, and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint** as He wrestled with him. And He said, **"Let Me go, for the day breaks."** But he said, **"I will not let You go unless You bless me!"** So He said to him, **"What is your name?"** He said, "Jacob." And He said, **"Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed."** (*Genesis 32:24-28*)

Jacob wasn't wrestling; he was holding on to the One. **Jacob found out that you don't get anywhere with God by struggling and resisting. The only way you get anywhere with Him is by yielding and just holding on to Him.** Abraham had learned that, and that is why he said "amen" to God. **He believed God, and He counted it to him for righteousness.** Abraham reached the end of his own strength and put his arms around God.

This lesson is for all of us when we get in that position, when we need to trust God. When you are willing to hold on, He is there ready to help you. Jacob resisted Him until the touch of God crippled him. Then, recognizing at last who He was, Jacob clung to Him until He blessed him. From this point on we see a change in Jacob. God marked this change in Jacob's heart by changing his name to Israel. He was a new man.



God's Eternal Truths

Relevant to us from Genesis 32

1

God communicates with us when we acknowledge our unworthiness.

- **The Truth:** For the first time, Jacob admits he is "not worthy of the least of all the mercies" God has shown him. When any person begins to move toward God on the basis that they are a sinner in God's sight, God will communicate with them.
- **New Testament Connection:** *Luke 18:13-14* is about the tax collector who beat his breast and said, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" went home justified. God draws near to the humble, not the self-sufficient.

2

Spiritual victory comes through yielding, not struggling.

- **The Truth:** Jacob wrestled all night, but he didn't prevail until God touched his hip and crippled him. Only then did Jacob stop fighting and start clinging. He learned that you don't get anywhere with God by resisting - the only way forward is yielding and holding on to Him.
- **New Testament Connection:** *James 4:7-8* "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." *2 Corinthians 12:9* "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

3

True faith leaves the burden with God.

- **The Truth:** Jacob prayed for protection and reminded God of His promises, but then made elaborate backup arrangements out of fear - revealing he wasn't truly trusting God at all. We often do the same: we pray, but when we finish praying, we pick the burden right back up and carry it ourselves.
- **New Testament Connection:** *1 Peter 5:7* "Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." *Philippians 4:6-7* "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."

Reflection Questions

Question 1

Acknowledging Unworthiness: When you approach God in prayer, do you feel entitled to His help because of your efforts, or do you come to Him with a humble heart that recognises you are undeserving of His mercies?

Question 2

Yielding vs. Struggling: Jacob's hip was touched to make him stop wrestling and start clinging. What "limp" or weakness in your life might God be using to force you to stop relying on your own strength?

Question 3

Leaving the Burden: After you pray about a worry, how quickly does it return to your mind? If it returns immediately, did you truly "cast" the burden on God, or did you merely describe it to Him?

Question 4

Think of a current conflict or problem you are trying to "fix" through sheer willpower. What would it look like to stop struggling and instead ask God, "What are You trying to teach me through this?"

Question 5

When a specific worry returns after prayer, practise treating it as a prompt to praise God for His promise rather than re-analysing the problem.



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