

## My Mighty God 10-21-07

Genesis 33

Jacob had wrestled with Jesus, and Jesus declared him the victor. It brings tears to my eyes to think of God's faithfulness to wrestle with me. He never overpowered me, but just kept wrestling until I wanted the blessing more than anything else in this world. Then He changed my identity and declared me the victor. Could you imagine a more patient and loving God? The wrestling left me with some handicaps that make me dependent on Him, and though I still pray to be set free from them, I can thank God that they keep me calling out to Him in prayer. I know that in my weakness, I find His strength. (2Corinthians 12:10) I'm sure many of you can relate to that.

**Commented [notes1]:** 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

The day had dawned. Jacob joined his family on the other side of the Jabbock River. In the distance he could see Esau and his 400 men on their way to meet them. He had done everything he could to make it a peaceful meeting. He had sent servants to announce his coming. He sent enough gift animals to please a king. What would Esau do? Had he forgiven him for stealing the birthright and the blessing? (Genesis 27:42) What had transpired in those 20 years?

**Commented [notes2]:** 42 When Rebekah was told what her older son Esau had said, she sent for her younger son Jacob and said to him, "Your brother Esau is consoling himself with the thought of killing you."

One group had gone on ahead and didn't appear to be in trouble, but Jacob wanted to take every last precaution. He divided his group into subgroups putting the maidservants with their children, then Leah and her children, and finally Rachel and Joseph. Perhaps he was thinking that if they were attacked, his favorites, Rachel and Joseph, might be able to get away and make it back to her father's home. Then Jacob did something unlike the old Jacob. <sup>3</sup> *He himself went on ahead and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother.* I think the old Jacob would have been in back with Rachel. He is starting to act like his new identity, Israel. He humbly bowed to the ground seven times.

Esau ran to meet him. Would he grab Jacob by the throat and strangle him on the spot. Jacob was in no condition to resist him. (Genesis 32:21) He was worn out by the night of wrestling and his hip was wrenched. Now he knew it was all up to God and God alone. God would keep His promises or Jacob would die.

**Commented [notes3]:** 31 The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip.

<sup>4</sup> *But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept.* What a relief! It wasn't strangulation but restoration. Esau must have found forgiveness in his heart years ago. Time has a way of mending those family wounds, if we will let it. They were fraternal twins, and though they were very different, they still cared for the other. Tears of relief on Jacob's part flowed freely, and tears of joy flowed from Esau at seeing his rascal brother grown and with a family.

I wish family members who have distanced themselves from each other could do what these two did. Just go see each other and give the person a hug. Cry

together. You don't have to see eye to eye. A generous gift might help. (Matthew 5:9) It's a nice way to say, "I'm sorry", without bringing up old wounds. Jacob could have insisted that he only took what was promised him at birth, but he came to realize that the way he did it had caused hard feelings. May God help us to see how our actions have affected others. (Romans 14:7)

**Commented [notes4]:** 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

The wives and children came next, and were introduced to Esau. This was the first time for him to meet his sisters-in-law and nephews and nieces. They had probably heard stories about uncle Esau and his ability to hunt game.

**Commented [notes5]:** 7 For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone.

<sup>8</sup> Esau asked, "What do you mean by all these droves I met?" "To find favor in your eyes, my lord," he said. I can't see this as anything other than an apology and an attempt to make amends. Jacob speaks with the language of respect and honor calling him "my lord". Can Esau see the change in him?

<sup>9</sup> But Esau said, "I already have plenty, my brother. Keep what you have for yourself." In the East, receiving a gift should customarily be followed by rejection of the gift as being too generous. This may be simply a record that they followed the formalities of the culture. Perhaps Esau, too, had been greatly blessed, and he really didn't need the gift. 400 men is quite an entourage.

<sup>10</sup> "No, please!" said Jacob. "If I have found favor in your eyes, accept this gift from me. For to see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favorably. This is the customary response. Yet, it wasn't the old Jacob. There were no other intentions. It was an apology and gratitude for being forgiven. What an expression to use after the previous nightlong encounter! He had just hours earlier named the arena where he wrestled with God, Peniel, for he had seen the face of God and lived. (Genesis 32:30) So what was he saying?

**Commented [notes6]:** 30 So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

What he saw in Esau's face, he had just seen in the face of God. In both cases he expected death. Jacob didn't describe God's face, but we know what he saw in Esau's face. Contrary to his expectation of wrath, he saw forgiveness, mercy, grace, and tears of joy. That was surely what he had just seen in the face of God manifest as a man. (John 1:14) That tells us that Jacob was convicted about his way of life and expected God to be angry with him. It also tells us that he was surprised by the grace and mercy he saw on the Man's face with whom he wrestled.

**Commented [notes7]:** 14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

We have numerous paintings of Jesus, but how do you capture what Jacob was expressing? How do you paint the expression of forgiveness, mercy, grace and love? When you picture Jesus in your mind, is that what you see. I think if you see His tears of joy, you can't help but have some of your own. (Luke 15:10)

**Commented [notes8]:** 10 In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

I believe that Jesus drew His parable of the Prodigal Son from this source. You remember that when the prodigal son returned home he had a great deal of guilt and wondered how his father would receive him. The son even used the same

language as Jacob, imagining he would be a servant. But like Esau, the father ran to greet him and threw his arms around him and kissed him. (Luke 15:20) These two stories use the same description, "...ran to meet him, threw his arms around him and kissed him." Jesus' point was that we shouldn't wait 20 years to be reconciled with God because we are afraid of facing justice. The forgiving face of Esau was like seeing the face of God in Jesus Christ.

**Commented [notes9]:** 20 So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

<sup>11</sup> Please accept the present that was brought to you, for God has been gracious to me and I have all I need." And because Jacob insisted, Esau accepted it. I think Jacob insisted on making amends for his own sake. He wanted to have a sense of making things right. This is the new Jacob, or I should say, Israel. It reminds me of the tax collector who had met Jesus. After coming to the knowledge of the love of God for him in Christ Jesus, he promised that he would pay back four times any amounts that he had extorted from anyone. He, too, wanted to rid himself of the guilt he had been carrying for years by making amends. When we truly love God, we want to love our neighbor as our self and that begins by making amends for past wrongs. (Luke 19:8; Matthew 5:23-24)

**Commented [notes10]:** 8 But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

Esau offered to escort Jacob. <sup>13</sup> But Jacob said to him, "My lord knows that the children are tender and that I must care for the ewes and cows that are nursing their young. If they are driven hard just one day, all the animals will die. <sup>14</sup> So let my lord go on ahead of his servant, while I move along slowly at the pace of the droves before me and that of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir." We only have an abbreviated form of the conversation that must have taken place. For some reason Jacob implied that he was going toward Edom to be near Esau.

**Commented [notes11]:** 23 "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

Perhaps Esau invited him to come join him and Jacob didn't want to openly refuse his brother's invitation of hospitality. Esau then suggested some of his men accompany him. There were roving bands of marauders that would love to have raided Jacob's wealthy camp so Jacob could have used this protective escort. But Jacob wasn't planning on going that way, so he told Esau it wasn't necessary. This seems like another bit of deception. We may also look at it as a round about way to refuse what may have been Esau's invitation of hospitality, just as Esau had tried to refuse the gift from Jacob. Esau may have understood this and accepted it as necessary. We will see later that, like Abraham and Lot, their herds are too large for them to stay in the same area. (Genesis 13:6; Genesis 36:7)

**Commented [notes12]:** 6 But the land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together.

Then instead of going southeast as he had implied, Jacob went northwest to Succoth. If archeologists have identified the correct place, this was still outside the Promised Land on the other side of the Jordan River. He may have been waiting for the right conditions to cross the stream, or he may have just been slow in obeying the Lord's command to return. He built a shelter for himself and for his animals. Succoth means shelters. You might be familiar with the term from the Feast of Succoth when the Jewish people live in temporary dwellings for a week to remind them of their 40-year journey through the wilderness. (Leviticus 23:42)

**Commented [notes13]:** 7 Their possessions were too great for them to remain together; the land where they were staying could not support them both because of their livestock.

**Commented [notes14]:** 42 Live in booths for seven days: All native-born Israelites are to live in booths

He moved on from there to the outskirts of Shechem, finally back in the Promised Land. It was town that was large enough to offer trade with him for his animals. <sup>19</sup> *For a hundred pieces of silver, he bought from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, the plot of ground where he pitched his tent.* God has promised the land would all belong to his heirs, but for now, he has to pay for space to camp. Stephen of the Book of Acts seems to indicate that Abraham may have previously purchased this same land. If that is the case, Jacob was buying back the burial place of those who had worked for his grandfather. (Acts 7:16) Archeologists aren't sure the value of the coinage mentioned, so we have no way of measuring what he paid.

**Commented [notes15]:** 16 Their bodies were brought back to Shechem and placed in the tomb that Abraham had bought from the sons of Hamor at Shechem for a certain sum of money.

The writer of Hebrews reminds us that the patriarchs lived in tents. His point was that this world is not our home. We are just passing through. And since they did not settle in any city, the writer said it showed that they were seeking a heavenly city, not one made by man, but one created by God. (Hebrews 11:9-10) Are we strangers and pilgrims in this world? Is this city our home, or are we looking for one to come? As godly as any city might become in this world, it will always be a far cry from New Jerusalem. Don't get too comfortable here. (1Timothy 5:6) We are just passing through. Amen?

**Commented [notes16]:** 9 By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.  
10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

**Commented [notes17]:** But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives.

<sup>20</sup> *There he set up an altar and called it El Elohe Israel.* On that land he purchased, he built an altar and called it God, the God of Israel. You could also translate it Mighty is the God of Israel. Both are applicable. Remember, that on his way out of the Promised Land at Bethel, which is now just 20 miles away, he promised that if God would bring him back safely, then the Lord would be his God. (Genesis 28:20-21) He is making a public declaration that this is the God he will worship, and He is mighty.

**Commented [notes18]:** 20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear  
21 so that I return safely to my father's house, then the LORD will be my God.

It is important for us to see that Jacob's name is now Israel. There is no nation of Israel yet. This is a very personal statement. He is saying, "My God is Mighty!" If your Lord and Savior is Jesus, whom Jacob wrestled with all those years, then you can put your name in there. Mighty is the God of \_\_\_\_\_. Jacob understood that God had brought him through all these precarious situations. Mighty is the God who rescued him when he stole the blessing from Esau. Mighty is the God who saw him safely to Laban's home and back again. Mighty is the God who caused the sheep and goats to have coloring that would make them his wages. Mighty is the God who kept Laban from killing him and taking back the wages he paid Jacob. Mighty is the God who changed Esau's heart to not want to kill him. In spite of the enemies he made, God was protecting and blessing him. Mighty is the God of Israel!

Can you say that your God is Mighty? Think about all the things He has seen you through. Think of all the answered prayers. Think about how He drew you to Himself even when you were insistent on going your own way. (Isaiah 40:11) Consider how He doesn't stop wrestling with you so that you will come to the end of yourself, and cry out with tears like Jacob did, pleading for His blessing. It

**Commented [notes19]:** 11 He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.

wasn't overpowering. He never crushed us when He would certainly have been justified in doing so. He just continued to have patience until, like Jacob, we plead for the blessing with tears. (Romans 2:4) Mighty is the God of \_\_\_\_\_ !

**Commented [notes20]:** 4 Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?

I can see Jacob looking back over his life and seeing His mighty God moving him about, dealing with his mistakes, protecting and directing him. He could see a number of times when he could have been killed by those he angered, but God delivered him. (2Samuel 22:18) He tried to deliver himself, but his efforts were never good enough. It was always his mighty God who stepped in and saved him. And now, twenty years after he escaped the wrath of Esau, he is back in his homeland with 4 wives and eleven children and great wealth in flocks and herds and in the good graces of Esau. That is what our mighty God is doing with us, seeing us through this life, blessing us along the way, until we come to our eternal home. Just as with Jacob, He has promised to never leave us until we make it there. (Matthew 28:20)

**Commented [notes21]:** 18 He rescued me from my powerful enemy, from my foes, who were too strong for me.

I hope this message has caused you to go over in your mind how gracious and yet mighty God has been in your life. It is only the grace of God that you were born again. (1Corinthians 1:30) If you were raised in the perfect home, it was the mercy and grace of God that placed you there. (Acts 17:26) I have this theory that God places the weakest of us in blessed situations because if in our weakness we were born in a third world pagan country we never would have come to Christ. It is all of God. The Scriptures tell us that we couldn't even desire to seek after God unless He placed it in our hearts. (Romans 3:11)

**Commented [notes22]:** 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Some of us have more dramatically visible "wrestling with God events" in our lives. The grace and mercy of God shines all the brighter because He patiently pursued us through all our years of resisting Him. But every changed life is just as miraculous and just as much a work of grace. (Ephesians 2:9-10)

**Commented [notes23]:** 30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

**Commented [notes24]:** 26 From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.

When you look back over your life, do you see the face of God? Do you see the same forgiveness, grace, mercy, and love with tears of joy that Jacob saw? If not, you need to come to Jesus and accept what He did for you on the cross. It was there that He paid your debt so that a holy and just God could accept you into His presence. It was when that prodigal came home repentant that the father ran to meet him and embraced him. Are you still wrestling, or have you come home? Has your identity been changed or are you still the same selfish person you've always been? (2Corinthians 5:17) Can you look back on your life and say, "My God is Mighty"? Or have you yet to let Jesus become your God? He's the only one that can see you safely home.

**Commented [notes25]:** 11 there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God.

**Commented [notes26]:** 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.  
10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

**Commented [notes27]:** 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!