



Strength In The Struggle

Genesis 32:24-32

24 And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. 25 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, as he wrestled with him. 26 And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. 27 And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. 28 And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. 29 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. 30 And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. 31 And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh. 32 Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank.

[i]

The Bible tells us in Genesis 28 that Jacob was a man of promise.

An anointed vessel, one of whom God said: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; 14 And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. 15 And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. [ii]

Jacob was an anointed, commissioned man of God, in spite of his shortcomings, and failures, God still had a purpose for his life!

But, the fact that Jacob was promised blessing and direction, didn't automatically guarantee his success, he never laid hold of the promise of God until after he endured a struggle that lasted all night long, and left him broken!

What I want to preach to this congregation today is this: **God gives us promises, but it's up to us to lay hold of them and claim them. And often, the strength to possess the promise is found in the struggle!**

The promise of the Holy Ghost was given to the disciples in **Luke 24:47-49**

47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 And ye are witnesses of these things. 49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

[iii]

The Lord gave a promise, and then immediately followed up that promise with a command to tarry, to wait, to endure, to seek after, to take hold of that promise, and to the 380 that walked away, even though they were given the same promise, never possessed it because they never endured the struggle!

I just want to start off this message with a strong word from the Lord for somebody:

THE STRUGGLE IS NOT TO DESTROY YOU, BUT IT'S TO HELP YOU GAIN STRENGTH TO POSSESS THE PROMISES GOD'S ALREADY GIVEN YOU!

God has brought us to a place of divine anointing, and divine change, and divine empowerment, and in order for us to receive into our lives the fulfillment of the promises of God we must first endure the struggle that lasts all night long, and leaves us broken, and weary, and sore – BUT WHEN WE COME OUT ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE NIGHT!

WHEN THE WEEPING OF THE NIGHT GIVES WAY TO THE JOY OF THE MORNING,

WE'LL FIND THAT WE HAVE BEEN CHANGED FOREVERMORE, THAT WE HAVE BEEN ENDUED WITH POWER FROM ON HIGH!

BUT, FIRST THE STRUGGLE!

DON'T CURSE THE STRUGGLE, THERE'S STRENGTH IN THE STRUGGLE!

DON'T CURSE THE PERSECUTION, THERE'S POWER IN THE PERSECUTION!

I.) JACOB WAS A SON BORN OF PROMISE.

From the time he was in his mother's womb, the promise of God rested on Jacob.

He was the second born of twins, but the Lord had already spoken to say, “**One day the elder will serve the younger.**”

- *Jacob was a man born with a rich heritage.*
- *The grandson of the man that God called friend.*
- *The grandson of the man that God designated to be the father of the faithful.*

The third generation of a man who had left his country, his family, started again from scratch, just to pursue a country whose builder and maker is God.

- *A man who was talented, suave, a smooth operator.*
- *But, also a man who had no need of God.*

Jacob means “supplanter, or deceiver”.

He was a man who was used to having whatever he wanted, whenever he wanted it.

- He was not accustomed to working like his father Isaac. He never had to re-dig any wells that had been stopped up.
- He was not accustomed to sacrifice like his grandfather Abraham.

When he wanted his brother's birthright, he simply waited until the time was right, offered a price that enticed Esau, and bingo! The birthright was his!

When he realized that the birthright was no good without his father's blessing, he simply disguised himself with animal skins, rubbed the scent of the woods on himself, made his voice gruff and went into Isaac, who was blind.

When all was said and done, he walked out with the blessing that rightfully belonged to Esau.

Even though it was prophesied of God, Jacob got his desire by his own hand, and own ability.

When Esau swore to kill him, Jacob ran to Uncle Laban's house, where he began to prosper, and everything he touched turned to gold.

When Laban tricked him into marrying Leah before Rachel, even tho he'd already labored for 7 years to marry Rachel, Jacob just laughed and said, **“Okay, uncle, you got me that time, but no problem, I’ve got a solution, I’ll just work 7 more years.”**

During his time with Laban, the Bible says in **Genesis 30:43**

43 And the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maidservants, and menservants, and camels, and asses.

[iv]

Through his own hands, Jacob amassed material wealth, was comfortable with his substance, and according to the standards of the world was on top of it all.

A man who may have felt, although he probably never voiced it, much like the Laodiceans would feel thousands of years later, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.”

I don’t need to lay hold of the promise of God, I’m doing pretty good on my own!

Until the day.....Esau boxed him in. Had a band of men coming to kill and destroy.

And now, God says to Jacob, **“I’ve let you do your own thing for a while now. I’ve let you acquire material gain, I’ve let you build a personal fortune, I’ve let you work things out on your own.**

But, I’ve got a greater purpose for you than you’ve ever imagined, and you’re not quite equipped to handle that purpose just yet!

And, so God allows a situation to befall Jacob that drives him to his knees, and he begins to call out on God from the depths of his soul!

And when he began to pray, he cried out, “Oh God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac.....”

- ***He said, “I’m ashamed to admit that I’ve never even cultivated a relationship of my own with you, God!***
- ***I dreamed about you at Bethel, and when I woke up, I realized you had been there and I didn’t know it.***
- ***But, I never needed you before!***
- ***I’ve always been able to work things out on my own, but now I’m at a dead end!***

Jacob, for the first time in his life, said **“God, I don’t know what to do! I can’t work my way out of this one! I can’t talk my way out of this one!”**

- ***My House of cards is tumbling down***
- ***I’ve Reached into my bag of tricks and found it was empty***
- ***Looked into my library of resources and found there was no book to help me deal with this subject***
- ***I Went to the well and found it dry***

And so here I am at Peniel, which means: **“facing God”**

Jacob said, **“God I’ve run smack into a brick wall here, and I have no choice but to turn to you!**

- ***I’m not running from you anymore, I’m facing you now!***
- ***I need an answer from heaven!***
- ***I’ve never really needed you before, but, now I’m laying hold of the promise of deliverance!***

And, God sent an angel to wrestle with Jacob until the breaking of the dawn.

- “*Yes, I promised deliverance, but you’re gonna have to fight for it!*
- *I promised protection, but you’re gonna have to struggle for it!*
- *But, if you’ll endure the struggle, you will be a changed man!*

The struggle is significant, because the struggle produces power in my life that I’ve never known before!

II.) LET ME SHARE WITH YOU THIS MORNING THE BEFORE AND AFTER OF JACOB.

1.) *Before the struggle, Jacob relied on his own strength.*

He went in to the struggle strong and complete within himself, but during the struggle God smote Jacob’s thigh.....this is significant, because God said “If I’m to be strong in you, your strength has to shrink!”

- *I must decrease, so He can increase.*
- *His strength is made perfect in weakness.*

After the struggle, his strength was diminished, but God’s was increased!

2.) *Before the struggle, Jacob went into this encounter a deceiver, supplanter*

In the struggle, his name was changed to Israel, because God said: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.[\[v\]](#)

Oh my! The power in the struggle!

When I stop relying on the arm of flesh, and put my total trust in God, I gain power!

It’s the struggle that produces the strength I need to overcome and prevail!

After the struggle, his name was Israel, which means power!

Strength is never born in comfort, strength is born in struggle!

And when we pray for God to strengthen us, we must realize the strength is going to come thru a face to face encounter with Almighty God, during which we’ll probably be smitten!

- *A fight during which He’s going to take away some of the strength that we’ve developed!*
- *God might take away some of the things that we’ve relied on for so long, and leave us crippled, hobbling, leaning and listing!*

But, when we come through the struggle, we’re going to have something much more awesome than an uncrippled leg, we’re going to have a new name!

We’re going to have power we never had before!

We’re going to have a confidence and trust in God like we’ve never had!

And, best of all, we’re going to see God face to face!

We’ll be able to say as Job did, “**I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee!**”

3.) *Before the struggle, Jacob slept through and entire night when God was all around him desiring to have fellowship with him.*

But, during the struggle, Jacob said, “I’ll stay up all night if this is what it takes! I’m not going to let you go, God, until you bless me!

4.) *Before the struggle, Jacob had no relationship with God, he prayed to the God of Isaac and Abraham.*

But, after the struggle, we find in **Genesis 33:20** And he erected there an altar, and called it Elelohe-Israel, Which literally means “**To the God of Israel!**”

In the struggle Jacob found his own God!

III.) I CAN THANK GOD FOR THE STRUGGLE, FOR IT'S THE STRUGGLE THAT BRINGS MY STRENGTH.

Jesus in wilderness!

Jesus was God manifest in the flesh.

He came and one of His claims was, “All power in heaven and earth is given unto me.”

He came to tell us that one day He would give us power over all the power of the enemy and nothing should by any means hurt us.

But, let me show you something.

Immediately after His baptism, when the spirit of God spoke from the heavens and said “**This is my beloved Son in whom I'm well pleased.**”

And, immediately the Bible says, “**He was led of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.**”

Now, when He went into the wilderness He went in full of the Holy Ghost, but when He came out, He came out in the power of the Holy Ghost!

The wilderness, the battle with the devil, is what empowered Jesus Christ to fulfill the promise of power!

[i]The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

[ii]The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

[iii]The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

[iv]The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

[v]The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.