

# GENESIS 32

## I GOT WHIPPED, WHAT A BLESSING!!!

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Most of us have had some type of scuffle on the playground as children. Some are almost instantaneous and some come under the heading of "Meet me after school on the playground!" sort of thing. Those to me were the toughest. You had to think about the confrontation all day long. It was impossible to think about your class work. All you could do was to strategize as to how you were going to try and whip the other guy. If the other guy was a lot bigger, then you might even be planning your escape.

It reminds me of the story of two high schools that were in close proximity to each other. They were bitter rivals. One Friday they played an exceptionally hard-fought football game, but neither side could pull out the win. This went on for hours. Finally it was decided that both schools would choose a champion from among them and they would meet at the large trestle bridge over the river separating the two communities the next morning. The two champions would fight it out and the winner would determine who won the football game.

The next morning both schools showed up on each side of the bridge to watch the champions fight it out in the center of the bridge over the water.

The champion from the first school, Danny Joe walked, out onto the bridge with all the bravado of Rocky Balboa until he came to a certain place on the bridge. He then turned and ran back to the safety of the crowd from his school, which by this time was dismayed by his behavior.

"Danny Joe, what's the problem?" they asked.

"I saw the sign, I can read. I am not fighting Clarence!" he answered back.

"What sign are you talking about and who is Clarence?" the crowd asked.

Danny Joe answered, "I don't know who Clarence is, but the sign says he is over 13 feet tall!"

Once again, I imagine we have all been in a playground scuffle, but it isn't often that we come away from it, win or lose, feeling blessed. Today we will see what that is like. I have heard it said before that sometimes the best thing that could happen to someone is that they get a good whipping. So sit back and see if you can relate as we get into Genesis chapter 32.

**Gen 32:1** So Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him.

**Gen 32:2** When Jacob saw them, he said, "This *is* God's camp." And he called the name of that place Mahanaim.

**Gen 32:3** Then Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom.

**Gen 32:4** And he commanded them, saying, "Speak thus to my lord Esau, "Thus your servant Jacob says: "I have dwelt with Laban and stayed there until now.

**Gen 32:5** I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, and male and female servants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in your sight." ' "

After Jacob left the presence of his father-in-law Laban, he was able to see the angels of God and actually meet with them. They had actually been there the whole time, but it was only after Laban left that he was able to see them. It is amazing how the circumstances we see actually affect the things that we see and how we see them.

After the worldly influence of Laban had gone, Jacob was able to see more of the spiritual side of things. This happens to us also. Many times we can't see the forest for the trees. Our minds and our lives are clogged with carnal issues and carnal remedies for them. The angels had been there guarding over Jacob and his family the whole time, but it is only now that he has seen them. It is an opportune time however.

Because of the meeting Jacob named the place where he camped Mahanaim, meaning "two camps or double camp."

Both he and God were in this place. This should have been comforting, but Jacob was still nervous. He was worried about his brother Esau and how he would respond to his return to his homeland. In order to test the waters and to appease Esau he sent out messengers to Esau of the news of his coming and that he came bearing gifts. When the messengers returned however, Jacob's blood ran cold.

**Gen 32:6** Then the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, "We came to your brother Esau, and he also is coming to meet you, and four hundred men *are* with him."

**Gen 32:7** So Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people that *were* with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two companies.

**Gen 32:8** And he said, "If Esau comes to the one company and attacks it, then the other company which is left will escape."

Remember, Jacob has reason to fear his brother. The name Jacob was given to him for a reason. He is a "supplanter." That is, he will leapfrog someone in order to get what he wants. He took his brother's birthright and Esau threatened to kill him. That is one reason he has been away for the last 20 years.

So Jacob divides his family and things in order that he could save at least half of everything he owned. In the middle of all this however, he prays to God.

**Gen 32:9** Then 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':

**Gen 32:10** 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.

**Gen 32:11** 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.

**Gen 32:12** 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.' "

Jacob's prayer came amidst what was in his mind a struggle for his very survival. That is how we are isn't it?

Let's look at this. Before we come down too hard on Jacob for a lack of faith I think we need to search ourselves first.

Jacob is scheming and praying. We would say that he is being practical, not necessarily lacking faith. I mean what man would not move his family and at least some of his possessions out of harm's way? That is what any good husband, father and businessman would do, right?

**We usually run on a combination of faith and practicality.** God does want us to use our brains, but Jacob has a history of scheming his way out of things. In his case, and many times ours also, the prayer is an afterthought or formality. It usually isn't the first response or the deciding factor.

Jacob was just visited by angels and was moving back home based on a promise of God. Now that has gone out the window and he is dividing his forces.

At any rate, we normally operate in much the same way. **God's promises and His hand in our lives are to be the norm for us.** That means that many of the things we do aren't what most others would do. That is why we are called a peculiar people in the New Testament.

**Gen 32:13** So he lodged there that same night, and took what came to his hand as a present for Esau his brother:

**Gen 32:14** two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams,

**Gen 32:15** thirty milk camels with their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten foals.

**Gen 32:16** Then he delivered *them* to the hand of his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants, "Pass over before me, and put some distance between successive droves."

**Gen 32:17** And he commanded the first one, saying, "When Esau my brother meets you and asks you, saying, 'To whom do you belong, and where are you going? Whose *are* these in front of you?'

**Gen 32:18** then you shall say, 'They *are* your servant Jacob's. It *is* a present sent to my lord Esau; and behold, he also *is* behind us.' "

**Gen 32:19** So he commanded the second, the third, and all who followed the droves, saying, "In this manner you shall speak to Esau when you find him;

**Gen 32:20** and also say, 'Behold, your servant Jacob *is* behind us.' " For he said, "I will appease him with the present that goes before me, and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me."

**Gen 32:21** So the present went on over before him, but he himself lodged that night in the camp.

Once again we see Jacob scheming. He sends the gifts ahead to hopefully appease his brother and his 400 men. Does it seem prudent, yes! Is this an act of faith? I think not at this juncture. If he was walking in faith he would have been at the head of the pack instead of hiding in the rear. Once again, he is running on a combination of his carnal thoughts and his faith.

This is important to see. Many times we see people in the Bible in terms of black and white. That is, we see them as holy or either a rank and file sinner. Most people aren't that way. There are many unsaved people that are nice, and they do nice things. There are many Christians that don't behave in a Christian manner much of the time. Most people don't act according to faith all the time.

Jacob is no different. When it comes to crunch time he reverts back to what he knows; scheming and manipulation. Many of us revert back to what we know also. We aren't to revert but to convert.

**Gen 32:22** And he arose that night and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven sons, and crossed over the ford of Jabbok.

**Gen 32:23** He took them, sent them over the brook, and sent over what he had.

**Gen 32:24** Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day.

**Gen 32:25** 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.

**Gen 32:26** And He said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks." But he said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!"

**Gen 32:27** So He said to him, "What *is* your name?" He said, "Jacob."

**Gen 32:28** 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."

**Gen 32:29** Then Jacob asked, saying, "Tell *me* Your name, I pray." And He said, "Why *is* it *that* you ask about My name?" And He blessed him there.

**Gen 32:30** So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

**Gen 32:31** Just as he crossed over Peniel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip.

**Gen 32:32** Therefore to this day the children of Israel do not eat the muscle that shrank, which *is* on the hip socket, because He touched the socket of Jacob's hip in the muscle that shrank.

So Jacob arose that night, took his family and placed them across the river for their safety. He then stayed on the East side of the river, which meant that he had an escape route if Esau chose to attack. As he was lying there, probably thinking about all that could possibly happen and all of his options, a “man” attacked him and they wrestled all night.

It is important to see in verse 25 that the word "He" is capitalized. This is telling us that the "He" is not just any man, but that this is a theophany and possibly a Christophany.

A theophany is an appearance of God as a man. A Christophany is a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus as a man. God attacked Jacob and was wrestling with him.

But, you might say, why does God have to struggle against a mere man, a momma's boy at that? God could have ended the fight at any moment, but **the match had a purpose.**

All his life Jacob had been a schemer, street-wise, relying on his wits and such. Although God has moved mightily on his behalf, even supernaturally at times, Jacob still relies on his flesh. He cannot consistently walk in the Spirit. He is still double-minded and the Bible says that a double minded man is unstable in all his ways. A double-minded man is inconsistent. Most of us are like that.

God has now placed Jacob in a fight which he can't win on his own. He can't beat God. He, like us had to see that he can't wrestle his way out of this. God has to be the one on whom he relies rather than himself.

Jacob asks the “Man” His name but receives no answer. Jacob however gets a new name. He is renamed Israel, meaning, “God rules.”

From that point on Jacob is referred to by both names. When he is walking in the flesh he is generally called Jacob. When he is walking in the Spirit he is generally referred to as Israel.

In fact he is referred to as Jacob twice as much as he is Israel. He still had a lot of the old man still in him. Can we say the same of ourselves?

Jacob named the place Peniel or Penuel meaning: "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

God blessed Jacob, but he also gave him something by which to remember him, a perpetual limp. With every step he took, Jacob would remember that wrestling match.

The Apostle Paul also had a plaguing ailment – a thorn in his flesh, which is thought by many to have been a mechanism to keep him humble. **Has God given us some sort of wound or thorn by which He gets our attention in order to remind us of a critical life lesson?**

- Many of us are haunted by our past.
- We can't fathom that God has taken our sins away and wants us to move forward.
- We also have problems not reverting back to that past when we get into trouble.
- We can't fathom that not only does God want us to move forward, but He is also preparing the way.



- When He calls us He enables us to complete the mission. Jacob forgot this and fell back on his wits instead of moving forward in faith.
- We can't be double-minded. We cannot continue to run on a combination of our wits and anemic faith. We have to hear God's promises and move forward in them to play a part in fulfilling them.
- Pain or a “thorn in our flesh” can be a reminder to us that something is not right. Back pain can be a means of knowing when we are not lifting correctly. At the very least, pain is a mechanism that tells something is not well.
- Maybe it is time for you to wrestle with God, to get a whipping and be blessed.
- You can't win the fight! Surrender!
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