

The Story of Jacob
Heroes of Faith Series
Week 13: Jacob's and Esau Reunite

Scripture

Genesis 33

Motivation

Where are we in the story? (Genesis 29-30)

- Jacob tricked his brother, Esau, out of the blessing and had to run for his life
- God met him at Bethel and promised to be with him
- Laban deceived Jacob into marrying Leah, instead of Rachel
- Jacob spent 20 years working, waiting, and trying to get ahead
- Family drama, rivalry, and manipulation were constant
- Jacob now wants to leave, but Laban wants him to stay.
- Jacob and Laban strike a deal, and God blesses Jacob's flocks through some strange breeding practices.
- Jacob is determined to reconnect with Esau with God's help and his own manipulation.
- God wrestles Jacob into submission and changes his name.

Information

Last week seemed like it would be a game-changer for Jacob! Alone, by himself, across the river from his family, he is assaulted/attacked all night long. Jacob is not one to surrender or give up. He is cunning, conniving, and driven. If someone was attacking him, matching hit for hit, he would not give up and roll over. With the sun about to rise, his assailant dislocates Jacob's hip with a gentle touch. Jacob is clinging on and fighting like a rabid toddler. He demands a blessing from his attacker. The attacker brings Jacob to his senses by asking Jacob his name. He asks not because he does not know, but it allows Jacob to fess up and own his life and sins. By just acknowledging his name, Jacob owns up to all of his actions/sins as the heel-grabbing deceiver. The attacker then gives him a new name and mission. Israel, his new name, means He who God Strives or He who God Rules. This is a new birth of sorts for Jacob. God gave him a new name and left his mark on him.

He is God's representative on earth. **Does this mean Jacob is sinless or perfect? NO.** Which is why from here on out, his name goes between Heel-Grabber and He who God Rules.

He is hobbling back across the Jabbok River to his family. Worn, broken, and in submission to God.

Reunion day had come. It was time to depart to meet his brother. Would Esau kill him? It no longer mattered. God Ruled Him.

Reunion Preparations

Genesis 33:1-3 (ESV) And Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming, and four hundred men with him. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two female servants. **2** And he put the servants with their children in front, then Leah with her children, and Rachel and Joseph last of all.

I am not going to lie. This, to me, is a little reprehensible. Ordering his family from least loved and valued to most valued and loved. At least Leah was toward the back. But Rachel, in case anything happens, could escape with Joseph. First, a parade of animals as gifts. Now, a parade of mothers and children. I Jacob just further protecting himself? Let's keep reading...

3 He himself went on before them, bowing himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

Jacob takes the lead. Yes, he is protecting his precious Rachel. But he is taking the lead out of humility and deference to his estranged brother. Seven is the number of completeness. Jacob bows down into the dirt where he was wrestled into submission just hours ago. Seven times showing his surrender and submission to his brother. This is a different Jacob.

Unexpected Response

Genesis 33:4-8 (ESV) But Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.

Reconciliation is near to the heart of God. In fact, this is almost the same wording that is used by Jesus in one of his most famous parables. God does things like this to draw and catch our attention to the things he wants us to notice and remember. So, Jacob is the prodigal brother!

Luke 15:20 (ESV) And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

Esau plays the part of the father. Running toward his brother, whom he had repeatedly tricked and taken from him. Remember Jacob's prayer, "God deliver me from the hand of Esau."? Even though Jacob was trying to manipulate God with his prayer, God would do something greater than protection...reconciliation. God restores the broken. Esau may have traveled there with malicious intent, and as his brother approached, God changed his heart toward reconciliation.

Proverbs 21:1 (ESV) The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will.

This is why we don't give up on anyone. No one is beyond the bounds of God's mercy and grace. NO One!

Let's continue...

Genesis 33:5-8 (ESV) And when Esau lifted up his eyes and saw the women and children, he said, "Who are these with you?" Jacob said, "The children whom God

has graciously given your servant.” 6 Then the servants drew near, they and their children, and bowed down. 7 Leah likewise and her children drew near and bowed down. And last Joseph and Rachel drew near, and they bowed down. 8 Esau said, “What do you mean by all this company that I met?” Jacob answered, “To find favor in the sight of my lord.”

Jacob’s gift parade baffled Esau. Because he did not have a strong sense that Jacob owed him anything. Esau was grateful to be with his twin brother again. Even though Jacob received the promises and blessings that Isaac intended for Esau, Esau was a man who was as blessed as Jacob.

Malachi, the final book of the Old Testament, opens with Jacob and Esau surprisingly. The statement you see is, “I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated.” It is also quoted in Romans 9:13, but what God is saying is that Jacob was the brother through whom the covenantal line (the promised one) would come through. Yes, Jacob’s line is the line of the promise! That is what it means when you read that statement.

Both brothers, regardless of the promise, had been deeply and richly blessed.

Jacob wants his brother to keep the 550 animals. Gratitude and Generosity

Genesis 33:9-11 (ESV) But Esau said, “I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself.” 10 Jacob said, “No, please, if I have found favor in your sight, then accept my present from my hand. For I have seen your face, which is like seeing the face of God, and you have accepted me. 11 Please accept my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough.” Thus he urged him, and he took it.

I don't think this is about placating or pacifying Esau. Jacob, in owning up to his name, is genuinely desiring to make things right and live by his new name. Both men were richly blessed, and Jacob was now offering the gifts from a remorseful and repentant heart.

Why does Jacob claim that Esau has the face of God? Remember, he just had that experience in the dark, seeing the face of God. The wrestling partner's intent was not anger, malicious, or hateful. Rather, Jacob saw in his face what he was seeing in Esau. Genuine peace, care, and love. Not the face he remembered when he escaped 20 years ago. This peace and love could only be brought about by love.

“Although Esau did not receive the great blessing—the covenant blessing,—that having gone to Jacob who secured it by deception, yet Esau did receive a great blessing of a temporal kind, which Isaac pronounced upon him with all the fervor of a father who loved his son most ardently. Esau thus received what he most wanted, for he cared very little for the spiritual blessing,—not being a spiritual man,—and when he obtained the temporal blessing, that satisfied his heart, and he said, ‘It is enough.’” (Charles Haddon Spurgeon)

Esau cared not for God nor wanted anything to do with Him. He and his family cared only for physical material things, and they had plenty. God had been gracious to Esau and brought peace to his bitter, angry heart. Nothing Jacob could have given or said could have done this. God works in hearts. Changing and transforming. Bringing true reconciliation.

Brothers Depart

Genesis 33:12-16 (ESV) Then Esau said, “Let us journey on our way, and I will go ahead of you.” 13 But Jacob said to him, “My lord knows that the children are frail, and that the nursing flocks and herds are a care to me. If they are driven hard for

one day, all the flocks will die. **14** Let my lord pass on ahead of his servant, and I will lead on slowly, at the pace of the livestock that are ahead of me and at the pace of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir.”

15 So Esau said, “Let me leave with you some of the people who are with me.” But he said, “What need is there? Let me find favor in the sight of my lord.” **16** So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir.

Why is Jacob acting like this? I think three things led him to go his own way.

1. God told him to go home. So, he needed to get back on the path homeward bound.
2. Because of Jacob’s transformation, he and Esau wanted and pursued two radically different things. He did not want to go and live and pursue a godless or idol-filled life that his brother followed.
3. Jacob knew that if they continued on together, eventually things could turn sour again. He did not want to put himself or his family into that kind of situation.

So, did Jacob go back to Bethel like he was told? Not exactly!

Partial Obedience

Genesis 33:17-19 (ESV) **17** But Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built himself a house and made booths for his livestock. Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth. And Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, on his way from Paddan-aram, and he camped before the city. **19** And from the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, he bought for a hundred pieces of money the

piece of land on which he had pitched his tent. **20** There he erected an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel.

Jacob was tired of sojourning. He wanted to settle down, so he made tabernacles(booths) for his livestock. Nothing is necessarily wrong with that. These structures were movable, and God told Abraham that he and his family would be strangers/sojourners in the land. **Genesis 15:13**. He promised the land to Abraham's ancestors, but as we saw a while ago. Abraham purchased a plot to bury Sarah. And now Jacob is stopping short of Bethel (about 20 miles) and buys property outside of the town of Shechem. And this disobedience will turn out to be very tragic for Jacob and his family.

Application

God knows better than us. We need to learn to trust him because he knows what lies ahead. He knows the consequences. He knows the way.