

THE ORIGINS OF IT ALL!: A STUDY OF GENESIS

XXXV.) SUPERNATURAL STRUGGLE

GENESIS 32:24-32

Q: Why is it that the people of God tend to seek the blessings of God through their own effort?

Q: What role does or should struggle play in the Christian's life?

SETTING:

- Jacob rests at the edge of the Land of Promise.
- Before him lies his big brother Esau and the community Esau leads. Jacob is filled with fear that Esau still harbors great resentment and desire for revenge as well as guilt over his own past actions. The only thing between them now is a river.
- Jacob has been given a divine revelation of assurance from God Himself. Still, he has prepared for the worst and taken every human means to seek appeasement and compromise, even if it means dividing that which God gave and promised him.
- *Once again, the future fulfillment of the Promise – and with it all of humanity – lies at a crossroads and seems to depend on the actions of one obviously weak and flawed man.*

A.) GRAPPLING v. 24

- Facing this situation and weight of responsibility, Jacob is left alone. Presumably, he is spending this time in anguished prayer of what lies ahead.
- What begins as an emotional battle over God's will and direction and Jacob's faith in it, soon and unexpectedly becomes very real. So real, in fact, as to become physical and last throughout the night.

Q: Just from this (without yet getting into the physical battle) what can we learn?

- The more we are willing to struggle with God alone and in prayer, even though it may be filled with doubts and anguish, the more real God and His Presence will become to us!
- True, we must understand that His physical manifestation with Jacob was an absolutely unique event that we should not ever expect to be repeated. But the symbolic principle should not be lost as something true for all of us!

Q: What is the significance that they wrestled literally all night? Does this mean Jacob was an equal in this battle?

- Jacob's determination was such that no man would not allow any man to physically defeat him. If he was to be defeated, it would have to be by extraordinary means.
- As part of His lesson, the supernatural opponent (Christ pre-incarnate) voluntarily wrestled with Jacob throughout the night solely as a physical man. It was a test Jacob passed.

Hosea 12:3-4

Q: Why the connection here between Jacob's grabbing at Esau's heel and wrestling with God?

- In both cases, Jacob is demonstrating great desire and persistence in grabbing a hold and possessing God's greatest blessings and responsibilities.
- For all of his failures, weaknesses, and foolishness, Jacob was always characterized by an unrelenting determination to prevail with the LORD! *How about you?*

Luke 18:1, 7

B.) DEPENDENCE v. 25

Q: Why did God now do this? A cheap shot?

- NO! First, the Lord permits Jacob to wrestle with Him all night as an acknowledgment and delight in Jacob's persistence.
- However, persistence alone is not enough. Not for Jacob in his predicament, nor for us in ours!
- What Jacob most needed was an unmistakable and unforgettable reminder of what would be required – dependence upon the LORD.
- His own physical prowess, mental toughness and stubborn persistence, great as they may be, are not enough to achieve God's will for his life. For that, only supernatural blessing and grace will suffice. So it is with us today as well!

C.) BLESSING vv. 26-29

- Even still, Jacob refuses to cease the struggle until he has been blessed and is confident of receiving the help he truly needs.
- By giving his name, Jacob was confessing his very nature and this is what must be transformed if he is truly to be blessed.
- With the changing of names, the Lord is recognizing and affirming a transformation in Jacob's character. Like everything else, we will see this transformation is a beginning of a process.
- From here on out he is no longer to be known or characterized as Jacob - the “Deceiver,” “Devious One,” “Supplanter.” Rather, he is now Israel - the “Prevailer,” the “One Who Fights Victoriously with God,” “as a prince hast thou power.”
- Israel can face and struggle against the entire world and be confident of victory with God's help.

D.) BOLDNESS vv. 30-32

- Now Jacob plays the 'name game' and, in doing so, displays a new level of boldness in place of his trepidation and pessimism.
- If he could survive a face-to-face encounter with God, then surely he can survive and depend on deliverance in a face-to-face encounter with his brother Esau or any other man.

Q: What is the connection of this naming to the ongoing remembrance and significance of the injured hip?

- There is a direct and even necessary correlation between being and recognizing the crippling of one's own strength and becoming bold in faith.