

Jacob Changed by God

— God Can Humble and Transform a Person's Life —

- Jacob Came to the End of Himself
- Jacob Was Alone With God
- Jacob Clung to God for Blessing
- Jacob Walked Away Changed

In our previous lesson, “Isaac and Jacob: The Promise Continues,” we saw that God’s promise continued by His faithfulness, not man’s perfection.

- God spoke to Isaac, God appeared to Jacob, and God promised to keep His Word.
- That lesson showed the promise line moving forward.

Today, God willing, we look closely at Jacob himself.

- Genesis 32 shows a man brought low before God.
- Jacob had lived through fear, family trouble, and conflict.
- Now, before meeting Esau, Jacob must first face a greater meeting: he is alone with God.

The main question is simple:

- **Can God humble and change a man, who has depended too much on himself?**
- Genesis 32 answers yes.
- God can bring a man low, teach him dependence, bless him, and cause him to walk differently.

A simple way to remember the lesson, is this:

- Jacob feared, prayed, wrestled, was weakened, clung, was blessed, and Jacob walked away changed.

This lesson will focus on humility, dependence, and change before God.

Before we come to Jacob wrestling in the night, we need to see what brought him to that night. Jacob was not standing in strength.

I. Jacob Came to the End of Himself

First, we need to remember that Jacob’s own name, carried a reminder of struggle and overreaching.

A. Jacob’s Name, Reminded Him of His Past

Jacob’s life had been marked, by striving.

Even from birth, Scripture connects Jacob, with taking hold of Esau’s heel.

Later, Esau spoke bitterly about Jacob’s name and actions.

- Scripture says, “**and after that, came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau’s heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old, when she bare them.**” ([Gen.25:26](#))

Explanation:

- The words, “**Took hold**” means — Jacob came out grasping Esau’s heel.
- “**Heel**” — is the back part of the foot; Jacob was born second, yet holding the firstborn, which pictures the struggle, that would follow.
- The name, “**Jacob**” — became connected with grasping and supplanting (Gen.27:36), But God would teach him, to cling to Him.

After Jacob received the blessing from Isaac, Esau connected Jacob’s name, with what Jacob had done.

- “**And he said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?**” ([Gen.27:36](#))

Explanation:

- The word, “**Supplanted**” means — to take the place of another, by overreaching.
- “**Birthright**” — was the special right, belonging to the firstborn.
- “**Blessing**” — refers to the spoken blessing, Isaac gave.
- Esau connected Jacob’s name, with Jacob’s actions.
- Scripture shows Jacob’s story, was marked by struggle, grasping, conflict, and finally humbling before God. ([Gen.25:22,26](#); [Gen.27:36,41](#); [Hos.12:3–4](#))

A man, may try to outrun his past, but he cannot outrun God.

- Jacob had gained much, but his life was still troubled.
- His name reminded him, that he had often grasped and struggled.

A simple picture is this:

- If a man has mud on his hands, he may hide them behind his back, but the mud is still there.
- Jacob needed more than a change in circumstances — He needed God to change him.

Jacob's past reminds us, that a man needs more than earthly advantage.
He needs to be humbled before God.

Jacob's past was serious, but now his fear was also pressing upon him.
As Esau approached, Jacob was forced, to see his need for God's mercy.

B. Jacob's Fear, Drove Him to Prayer

Jacob had left home years earlier, because Esau hated him.

Now Jacob hears that Esau is coming, with four hundred men — This news shook Jacob deeply.

- Scripture says, **"And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him. Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands;"** ([Gen.32:6-7](#))

Explanation:

- The words, **"Greatly afraid"** means — Jacob was deeply fearful.
- **"Distressed"** means — troubled, pressured, and anxious.
- **"Two bands"** means — Jacob divided his company, into two groups.
- Jacob's fear was not small — He believed his family and household, might be in danger.

After Jacob made arrangements, he prayed.

In this prayer, we hear a humbled man confessing his unworthiness, and asking God to deliver him.

- **"And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well, with thee:**

I am not worthy of the least, of all the **mercies**, and of all the **truth**, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff, I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. **Deliver** me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for **I fear him**, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother, with the children." ([Gen.32:9-11](#))

Explanation:

- **"I am not worthy"** — shows humility — Jacob did not claim, that God owed him anything.
- **"Mercies"** — refers to God's kindness and compassion.
- **"Truth"** — refers to God's faithfulness, to what He had spoken.
- **"Deliver"** means — rescue or save.
- **"I fear him"** — shows, Jacob honestly confessed his fear, before God.

Jacob had possessions, servants, flocks, and family,
but he knew, he could Not save himself — His prayer shows dependence.

A child who is lost, may stop pretending to know the way, when he finally cries out for his father.

- Jacob's prayer was like that.
- He stopped standing on his own worthiness, and cried out for God's mercy.

Fear can expose, where our strength ends.
Jacob's fear drove him to pray, and his prayer showed humility.

Jacob, came to the end of himself.

- His name, reminded him of struggle.
- His past, had consequences — His present danger, made him afraid.
- But in fear, Jacob prayed — He confessed, “**I am not worthy**,” and asked God to deliver him.
- Jacob was being prepared, for a night that would change him.

After Jacob prayed and sent his household across the brook,
the Bible brings us to the heart of the lesson.

II. Jacob Was Alone With God

Now we come to the quiet and serious words:

A. Jacob Was Left Alone

Jacob sent his family and possessions over the brook Jabbok.
The man, who had many people around him, now stands alone in the night.

The Bible says,

- “And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two womenservants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford **Jabbok**. And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had. And Jacob was **left alone**; and there **wrestled** a man, with him, **until the breaking of the day**.” ([Gen.32:22–24](#))

Explanation:

- The word, “**Jabbok**” — was the brook, Jacob crossed.
- “**Left alone**” means — Jacob was separated, from his family and possessions.
- “**Wrestled**” means — there was a real struggle.
- “**Until the breaking of the day**” means — the struggle continued through the night, until daybreak.

Hosea, later refers to this event, and helps us understand,
that this was not merely, a common wrestling match.

Scripture says Jacob had power with God and prevailed over the angel.

- “He took his brother **by the heel** in the womb, and by his strength, he had **power with God**: Yea, he had power over **the angel**, and prevailed: he **wept, and made supplication** unto him: he found him in Beth-el, and there he spake with us;” ([Hos.12:3–4](#))

Explanation:

- The phrase, “**By the heel**” — recalls Jacob's lifelong pattern of struggle.
- “**Power with God**” — shows, Jacob struggled and held on before God; Not that he was stronger than God.
- “**The angel**” — is Hosea's inspired description, of the One involved in the encounter.
- “**Prevailed**” — shows, Jacob received the blessing by clinging, Not by conquering.
- “**Wept, and made supplication**” — shows humble pleading, Not proud strength.
- Jacob's “power” was dependent persistence — because he needed, God's blessing.

Hosea does more than explain Jacob's wrestling; he also gives the needed response.

After looking back to Jacob, Hosea tells God's people, what this lesson should move them to do.

- **"Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually."** ([Hos.12:6](#))

Explanation:

- The statement, **"Turn thou to thy God"** means — come back **to God**, in humble submission.
- **"Keep mercy and judgment"** means — live with kindness and right judgment, **before God**.
- **"Wait on thy God continually"** means — keep depending **on God**, Not self.
- Jacob's lesson, should move us to turn, obey, and depend **on God**.

Jacob was separated from his family and possessions, but he was Not separated from God.

- When every earthly support was moved aside, God met him there.
- Sometimes God teaches dependence, by bringing a man to the place, where only God can help.

Jacob wrestled through the night, but the struggle did not end with Jacob proving his own strength.

It ended when...

B. God Touched, Jacob's Strength

The one wrestling with Jacob, could end the struggle with a single touch.

This shows that Jacob, was Not stronger than God — God was humbling Jacob.

Scripture says,

- **"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."** ([Gen.32:25](#))

Explanation:

- The words, **"Prevailed not"** means — Jacob was allowed to continue in the struggle.
- **"Touched"** — shows how easily Jacob's strength, could be weakened.
- **"Hollow of his thigh"** — refers to the hip joint area.
- **"Out of joint"** means — Jacob's thigh was dislocated or disabled.
- Jacob learned that his strength, could be taken away in a moment.

The Bible teaches that affliction and correction, are not pleasant in the moment, but they can produce good fruit, when they bring us into submission to God.

The writer of Hebrews said,

- **"Now, No chastening for the present, seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: Nevertheless, afterward, it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness, unto them, which are exercised thereby."** ([Heb.12:11](#))

Explanation:

- The word, **"Chastening"** means — correction, training, or discipline.
- **"Grievous"** means — painful or sorrowful.
- **"Yieldeth"** means — produces.
- **"Peaceable fruit of righteousness"** means — the good result, of being trained by God's correction.
- This principle helps us understand, that being humbled can hurt, but it can also teach us righteousness.

Jacob's thigh was touched, and his own strength failed.

- God did not weaken Jacob to destroy him, but to humble him.
- Jacob had to learn that blessing comes, not by self-strength, but by dependence on God.

Now that Jacob's strength has been touched, we see what he does next.
He does Not run from God.

III. Jacob Clung to God for Blessing

After Jacob was weakened, he still held on.
The words he speaks, show what he truly needed.

A. Jacob Knew, He Needed God's Blessing

The Biblical record states,

- "And he said, **Let me go**, for the day breaketh.
And he said, I will not let thee go, **except thou bless me.**" ([Gen.32:26](#))

Explanation:

- The phrase, "**Let me go**" — shows the struggle was nearing its end.
- "**Except**" means — unless.
- "**Bless me**" means — Jacob knew, he needed favor and help from God.
- Jacob did not ask first for wealth, revenge, or earthly greatness — He asked for blessing.

Hosea, tells us more about Jacob's attitude.

He prevailed, while weeping and making supplication.

- Scripture says, "**Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him:**" ([Hos.12:4a](#))

Explanation:

- The word, "**Prevailed**" — does Not mean, Jacob overpowered God by superior strength.
- "**Wept**" — shows brokenness.
- "**Supplication**" means — humble pleading.
- Jacob prevailed as a humbled man, who clung to God and pleaded for blessing.

A drowning man, does not argue about how strong he is — He grabs the hand, that can save him.

- Jacob had been weakened, and now he clung — This is dependence.
- Dependence says, "Lord, I cannot bless myself — I need, what only You can give."

Jacob learned to cling.

He knew he needed God's blessing, more than he needed to prove his own strength.

But before Jacob received a new name, he had to answer a very simple question.

B. Jacob Faced His Name and Received a New Name

The man whose name, was connected with grasping and supplanting, had to speak his name.

- Scripture says, "**And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. 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.**" ([Gen.32:27-28](#))

Explanation:

- The question, "**What is thy name?**" — brought Jacob face to face, with who he was.
- "**Jacob**" — reminded him of his past.
- "**Israel**" — is explained in the verse:
"for as a prince, hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed."
- "**Prevailed**" means — Jacob received the blessing,
Not because he was proud and strong, but because he was humbled and dependent.

The New Testament teaches the same principle: God gives grace to the humble, Not to the proud.

- James wrote, “**But He giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.**” ([Jas.4:6](#))

Explanation:

- The word, “**Grace**” means — favor from God.
- “**Resisteth**” means — God stands against the proud.
- “**Proud**” describes — the lifted-up heart, that trusts itself.
- “**Humble**” describes — the lowly heart, that submits to God.

James continues, by telling men what they must do before God.

- He said, “**Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up.**” ([Jas.4:10](#))

Explanation:

- The words, “**Humble yourselves**” means — come low before God.
- “**In the sight of the Lord**” means — before God’s eyes, not merely before men.
- “**Lift you up**” means — God exalts, according to His will.
- Jacob was lifted up, only after he was humbled.

A doctor cannot treat a wound, that a patient refuses to show.

- Jacob had to say, “**Jacob.**” — He had to face his name.
- God changed his name to Israel.
- The change of name, did Not erase the need for humility.
- It showed, that God had dealt with Jacob and blessed him.

Jacob faced who he was, and God gave him a new name.

God’s blessing came with humbling, confession, and dependence.

Jacob received the blessing, but the lesson was not over.

IV. Jacob Walked Away Changed

First, Jacob understood, that this night was not ordinary.

He named the place, according to what had happened there.

A. Jacob Saw God and Lived

Scripture states,

- “**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.** And Jacob called the name of the place **Peniel:** for I have seen God face to face, and **my life is preserved.**” ([Gen.32:29–30](#))

Explanation:

- The statement, “**Tell me...thy name**” — shows Jacob desired to know more.
- “**He blessed him there**” — shows the blessing was actually given.
- “**Peniel**” is explained in the verse: “**for I have seen God face to face.**”
- “**My life is preserved**” means — Jacob knew, he had been spared.

Jacob's words show gratitude, that his life was preserved.

The Psalms also give language, for recognizing God's deliverance.

- “For thou hast **delivered my soul from death**, mine eyes from tears, and **my feet from falling**.” ([Psa.116:8](#))

Explanation:

- The word, “**Delivered**” means — rescued.
- “**My soul from death**” — expresses preservation of life.
- “**My feet from falling**” — shows God's help, in keeping one from ruin.
- Jacob, knew his life had been preserved, by God's mercy.

Jacob did Not leave saying, “Look what I accomplished.”

He left saying, “My life is preserved.” — That is humility.

A proud man, talks about what he has done — A humbled man, gives God the glory for mercy.

- Jacob recognized God's mercy.
- He had seen God's power and lived.
- Blessing, should make a man more reverent toward God, Not more proud in himself.

Jacob was blessed, but he did not walk away untouched.

The Bible says the sun rose, and Jacob limped.

B. Jacob's Walk Was Different, After God Changed Him

As the sun rises, Jacob passes over Penuel.

He is blessed, renamed, and preserved, but he is also limping.

- Scripture says, “**And as he passed over Penuel**, the sun rose upon him, and he **halted** upon his thigh. **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.” ([Gen.32:31–32](#))

Explanation:

- The word, “**Penuel**” — is the place connected with Peniel, where Jacob said he had seen God face to face.
- “**Halted**” means — Jacob limped.
- “**Sinew**” refers to — a tendon or strong tissue, connected with movement.
- “**Eat not of the sinew which shrank**” — means Israel avoided that corresponding sinew, in animals they ate, as a reminder of where God touched Jacob's thigh.
- “**Touched**” — reminds us, that God humbled Jacob's strength.
- Jacob's walk was changed, after his encounter with God, even in how he humbly approached Esau. ([Gen.33:3–4](#))

Under Christ, true change is Not merely outward.

- Paul said, “**put off**, concerning the **former conversation**, the **old man**, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts; **And be renewed** in the spirit of your mind; **And that ye put on the new man**, which after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness.” ([Eph.4:22–24](#))

Explanation:

- The words, “**Put off**” means — remove or lay aside.
- “**Former conversation**” means — the former manner of life.
- “**Old man**” refers to — the old sinful way of living.
- “**Renewed**” means — made new in mind and spirit.
- “**New man**” refers to — the life God requires, in righteousness and holiness.

In Christ, the change God requires, is described as becoming a new creature.

- The Bible says, “**Therefore IF any man be IN Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.**” ([2Cor.5:17](#))

Explanation:

- The phrase, “**IN Christ**” — shows where spiritual newness is found ([Eph.1:3](#); [Rom.6:3-4](#); [Gal.3:26-29](#)).
- “**New creature**” means — a new creation.
- “**Old things are passed away**” means — the former sinful life, must Not continue as before.
- “**All things are become new**” — shows true change before God.

Jacob walked away with a limp.

- That limp was Not a sign, that God had failed him.
- It was a reminder, that God had changed him.

A man who touches a hot stove, remembers the lesson, when he sees the scar.

- Jacob’s limp, reminded him that he had met God and could Not keep walking, as the same self-reliant man.
- Jacob left Peniel blessed, but he also left humbled.
- A man changed by God, should walk differently.

Now let’s gather the lesson, in some,

V. Closing Thoughts

Jacob came to the end of himself.

- His name, reminded him of striving.
- His fear, drove him to prayer.
- He confessed, “I am not worthy.”

Then Jacob was left alone.

- God met him in the night.
- Jacob wrestled, but God touched the hollow of his thigh
- and showed that Jacob’s strength, could be taken away in a moment.

Jacob then clung for blessing.

- He did not prevail by proud strength.
- Hosea says he wept and made supplication.
- Jacob answered the question, “What is thy name?” and said, “Jacob.”
- God gave him, the name Israel.

Finally, Jacob walked away changed.

- He named the place Peniel, because he had seen God face to face, and his life was preserved.
- The sun rose, and Jacob halted (or limped) upon his thigh.

The lesson is simple:

- God can humble and transform a person's life.

Lessons Learned:

- A man cannot truly be changed, until he is willing to be humbled before God.
- Jacob had to stop standing on his own strength.
- Fear, can become a doorway to prayer.
- Jacob said, "I fear him," but he brought that fear before God.
- God can meet a man, when he is alone.
- Jacob was separated from family and possessions, but Not from God.
- God can touch the very place, where a man thinks he is strong.
- Jacob's thigh was touched, and his strength failed.
- Prevailing with God, is not proud self-power.
- Hosea says Jacob "wept, and made supplication."
- God gives grace to the humble.
- James says, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."
- A changed man should walk differently.
- Jacob left Peniel with a limp.
- In Christ, the old man must be put off and the new man put on ([Eph.4:21-23](#); [Col.3:1-3, 9](#); [Gal.3:26-27](#)).

Questions for Reflection:

- Am I trying to solve problems, by my own strength?
- Have I honestly confessed, my unworthiness before God?
- Do I cling to God for blessing, or do I cling to my own way?
- Has God's Word, changed how I walk?
- Am I willing to put off the old man, and put on the new man?

Today's emphasis was Jacob: humbled, dependent, blessed, and changed.
God willing, the next lesson, will move forward to Joseph,
and show how God can work through suffering, betrayal, and delay.

Jacob needed God's blessing, and so do we.

But today, God has revealed the blessing of salvation IN Christ, through the gospel.

The lesson is yours!

It is the Lord, Who invites, and we await to assist.

Won't you come...

- Desiring to **hear** the gospel ([Rom.10:17](#)), **Believing** in Christ ([Heb.11:6](#); [Jn.8:24](#))
- **Repenting** of sins ([Lk.13:3](#); [Acts 17:30](#)), **Confessing** your belief ([Acts 8:37](#); [Rom.10:9-10](#))
- And Be **Baptized** for the forgiveness of sins ([Acts 22:16](#); [Mk.16:16](#); [Acts 2:38](#); [1Pet.3:21](#); [Gal.3:26-29](#))

...While we stand and while we sing.