

SALT Church

Genesis 32

“The Crippling Grace of God”

August 12, 2026

“In the Beginning”

Recap:

- Genesis 31 had Jacob and his family along with all that he had been blessed with leaving Laban house and fleeing while Laban was away tending his sheep.
- With nearly a week head start Jacob was found by Laban in the mountains, it was there that the Lord intervened on Jacobs behalf and warned Laban to not mistreat Jacob.
- Laban and Jacob made a covenant together to never harm each other and Laban and his men went on their way.
- Chapter 32 continues Jacob and his families journey back home to his father Isaac.

Genesis 32

32 Now Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. ² Then Jacob said when he saw them, “This is God’s camp.” So he named that place Mahanaim.

- What a wonderful way to begin a chapter, ***“and the angels of God met him.”***
- Jacob had an encounter with God and the angels near this very same place over 20 years earlier.

- It was there that God made His covenant with Jacob to watch over him and bless him.
 - But that was a different Jacob, this Jacob is well into his nineties and had been humbled by a greedy father-in-law.
 - This Jacob had matured and so God had saw fit to lead him back home.
- ***“Mahanaim”*** means two camps
 - Jacob had brought his camp to the camp of the Lord.
- I wish we had more information about this visit from the angels.
 - I can only imagine how this timely visit encouraged Jacob as he recalled the promises that were made to him so long ago.

We continue:

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

- There seems to a good amount of time that passes.
 - I say this because we will soon see that Jacob is traveling with a large group of people and animals.
 - The logistics would require a water source as well as grass to feed all of the animals.
- This is an important detail as this is south of where he was headed.
- This is an indication that Jacob desired to be reconciled to his brother Esau.
 - Time doesn't heal all wounds, in fact time can often make the wounds deeper and more toxic.
 - I think what we see here is a brother who desires to be reconciled. (Twin brother)

4 He also commanded them saying, “Thus you shall say to my lord, to Esau: ‘Thus says your servant Jacob, “I have sojourned with Laban and have been delayed until now; 5 and I have oxen and donkeys and flocks and male and female slaves; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in your sight.””’

- The language here is one of humility.
- Here we find Jacob saying to his brother that he is willing to humble himself before his brother so that they can have the difficult conversation.

6 Then the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, “We came to your brother, to Esau, and furthermore he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him.”

- That report would have been a bit unnerving.
- My guess is that Esau told these messengers that he would go and meet his brothers with 400 men.
 - This can't be good!

7 Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people who were with him, and the flocks and the herds and the camels, into two camps.

- Don't miss the irony of these “two camps.”
- Before there were two camps and there was no worry for the Lord was with Jacob.
- Now there are two camps and nothing but worry.
 - 400 men coming at you will do that to a man.

⁸And he said, “If Esau comes to the one camp and strikes it, then the camp which remains will escape.”

- It would be easy for us to get on our high horse here.
 - Didn't God say that He would protect you, Jacob?
 - Didn't He intervene with Laban?
 - Why would He save you from Laban only to deliver you to Esau?
 - And didn't that same God say that Esau would serve the younger Jacob?

What do we do when we are in trouble?

- We pray!

⁹And Jacob said, “O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O Yahweh, who said to me, ‘Return to your land and to your kin,’ and I will prosper you,^{’10} I am unworthy of all the lovingkindness and of all the truth which You have shown to Your slave; for with my staff only I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps. ¹¹ Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and strike me down with the mothers and the children. ¹² For You said, ‘I will surely prosper you and make your seed as the sand of the sea, which is too great to be numbered.’” ¹³ So he spent the night there.

- I love the fact that Jacob is praying the promises of God the Father.
- This is what we all should do on a regular basis.
- Notice there was no answer immediately.

Then he took from what he had with him a present for his brother Esau:

- He took a portion of what he had with him
 - Listen to this portion

¹⁴ two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, ¹⁵ thirty milking camels and their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys.

- That's 580 animals!

¹⁶ And he gave them into the hand of his servants, every flock by itself, and said to his servants, "Pass on before me and put a space between flocks."

- Think about what Jacob is doing
 - He is staging how these animals will be presented to his brother Esau.
 - Jacob understands that timing is very important.

¹⁷ And he commanded the first one in front, saying, "When my brother Esau meets you and asks you, saying, 'To whom do you belong, and where are you going, and to whom do these animals in front of you belong?' ¹⁸ then you shall say, 'These belong to your servant Jacob; it is a present sent to my lord, to Esau. And behold, he also is behind us.'"

- This will be the pattern for all of the folks as they are presented to Esau.

19 Then he commanded also the second and the third and all those who followed the flocks, saying, “After this manner you shall speak to Esau when you find him; 20 and you shall say, ‘Behold, your servant Jacob also is behind us.’” For he said, “I will appease his face with the present that goes before me. Then afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will lift up my face.” 21 So the present passed on before him, while he himself spent that night in the camp.

- This is an important step in Jacobs maturation.
- In the past he would have put himself first but what we see here is a man who is trying to appeal to his brothers mercy.
 - Why?
 - Because Jacob knows who he used to be.
 - He had deceived and stolen from his brother and father before his departure.

22 And he arose that same night and took his two wives and his two servant-women and his eleven children and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. 23 And he took them and sent them across the stream. And he sent across whatever he had.

- Now he is alone as he wrestles with God about his future.

24 Then Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until the breaking of dawn.

- That seems like an odd statement to me.
- No other details like “when Jacob went to sleep” or “suddenly a man came to Jacobs tent.”

- This sounds like a man suddenly appeared in the darkness.
 - Unseen but clearly felt
- Keep in mind that this wrestling match continues throughout the night until the breaking of dawn.

What is going on here?

- What is God doing?
 - Surly there is more to this than a wrestling match.

²⁵ And he saw that he had not prevailed against him, so he touched the socket of his thigh; and so the socket of Jacob's thigh was dislocated while he wrestled with him.

- We already know that this is Jesus that is wrestling with Jacob
- And we know that He has the power at any time to end this wrestling match.
- And when the sun began to come up, Jesus touches Jacobs hip and it comes out of socket.
 - You would think that Jacob would have stopped fighting but he doesn't!

²⁶ Then he said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking."

- Why would Jesus care if the sun is coming up?

But he said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

- This expresses the idea that Jacob was well aware that he was not wrestling a normal man.

²⁷ So he said to him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Jacob.”

- Why would Jesus ask him his name?
- What does Jacob mean?
 - Heal grabber, deceiver,
 - It is as if Jesus is making Jacob admit who he is:
 - A liar, fraud, thief, cheater!
 - It is good to confess to the Lord

Now watch the grace and mercy of the Lord

²⁸ Then He said, “Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed.”

- Israel means to “God fights or God strives”
 - All of Jacobs life he knew who God was but he continued to fight with God.
 - And as we see he also fought with Laban and Esau therefore we conclude that he fought with man also.
 - In the end Jacob was broken by the crippling grace of God.
 - For God had called him to confess about who he was.
 - In the end God reminded him that his whole life had been strife.
 - Now in his submission to God, God gives him a new name “Israel” and proclaims that he has prevailed!
 - But how had Israel prevailed?
 - He had finally come to the end of himself and refused to let go of God.

(side note)

- Many of us have this very testimony
 - We knew better and yet we fought with God and man.
 - But when God touched us and broke us we finally prevailed over the one that was causing all of the strife (us!)

Jacob walked into his tent that night as the deceiver but he will limp out Israel, the one whom God fights for.

²⁹ Then Jacob asked him and said, “Please tell me your name.” But he said, “Why is it that you ask my name?” And he blessed him there.

- When I first read this, I thought it was an odd response of Jesus (God the Son) to respond in this way.
- But it occurred to me that Jacob already knew the answer to his question and therefore Jesus felt no need to respond but to show him who He was by way of blessing.

³⁰ So Jacob named the place Peniel, for he said, “I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been delivered.”

- Peniel means face of God
 - Some scholars believe that this was the reason that the wrestling match had to end before Jacob could have enough light to see Jesus face to face.
 - Later Moses will tell us that if man were to see the face of God he would die instantly.

- No matter what we believe we understand that this was Jesus making another appearance in the Old Testament.

31 And the sun rose upon him just as he crossed over Peniel, and he was limping on his thigh.

- What a beautiful illustration of when we encounter God he changes the way we walk through this life.

32 Therefore, to this day the sons of Israel do not eat the sinew of the hip which is on the socket of the thigh because he touched the socket of Jacob's thigh in the sinew of the hip.

- This was a powerful life changing moment for Jacob
- Such was the change that it became important enough for God's people to change the way they consumed meat.