

III. CHRIST, THE WRESTLER: Genesis 32:22-32

INTRODUCTION. Let me lay out Four preliminary truths that need to be understood before digging deep into Genesis 32. Four preliminary truths concerning Genesis 32, then Six truths gleaned directly from the passage, and we will finish with Six Directions for your everyday life.

I. FOUR PRELIMINARY TRUTHS

I. The angel of the LORD Jacob wrestles in Genesis 32 is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God (Gen. 32:28; Hos. 12:3-4).

- **Genesis 32:28** "Then he said, 'Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed.'"
- **Hosea 12:3-4**
 - "3 In the womb [Jacob] took his brother by the heel,
and in his manhood he strove with God.
 - 4 *He strove with the angel and prevailed;
he wept and sought his favor."*
- **MATTHEW POOLE:** "An angel, yea, the Angel of the covenant, the Son of God, as it is plain from Genesis 32:28,30, Ho 12:3-4, who did here, as oft elsewhere, assume the shape and body of a man, that he might do this work."

Christ is the Serpent Crusher who, by His becoming a man and working for His peoples' redemption, will bless all the nations of the earth.

But this brings up an important question:

QUESTION. How can I make certain I am one that Christ blesses?

ANSWER. Lay hold of Christ by faith and you will get the blessing of redemption (*you can see a picture of this with Jacob in Gen. 32*).

- **Song of Solomon 3:4** "I found him whom my soul loves. I held him, and would not let him go."

Christ saves from the greatest enemies—Satan, sin, and death.

Christ saves from the power of Satan and brings you into God's family, adopted by God the Father;

Christ saves from sin's penalty and power, forgiving you of all your rebellion against God, counting you righteous before Him, and empowering you by God the Holy Spirit to live a new life dying to sin and living to righteousness as you walk with the Church in obedience to God's Law;

Christ saves also from death itself. Death no longer has dominion over Jesus, because He rose from the dead, and death therefore no longer has dominion over those who belong to Christ by faith. You and I who belong to Christ will live with Him forever on the renewed earth, wherein righteousness reigns and we reign in perfection with Christ.

USE FOR COMFORT

Q. You WEAK BELIEVERS, riddled with doubts, can you look at Christ and say what the bride does to her bridegroom in Song of Solomon 3:4?

- **Song of Solomon 3:4** "I found him whom my soul loves. I held him, and would not let him go."
 - Praise God, weak believers, that it is not the strength of your faith that saves you, but the object of your faith, Jesus Christ Himself!

Q. You STRONG BELIEVERS, confident in Christ and His promises, assured of your salvation, do you know the strength you have to lay hold of Christ by faith is a gift?

- **Ephesians 2:8-9** "By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."
 - Praise God, strong believers, that the infinitely strong Christ has enabled you by His Spirit to build those muscles of faith and lay hold of Him and His promises with all your might!

Q. You UNBELIEVERS, you who are not yet baptized, do you want to be saved from Satan, sin, and death by Christ? BOYS AND GIRLS...

- **Isaiah 45:22** "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other."
 - Turn from your sin, receive and rest in Christ as He is offered to you in the gospel, be baptized, join the church, then walk with the Church all your days for the glory of God, the good of your neighbors, and your own gladness.

II. Secret prayer can be likened to wrestling with God (Gen. 32:23-24, Hos. 12:4).

- **Hosea 12:4**
*"He strove with the angel and prevailed;
he wept and sought his favor (made supplication, i.e. prayer)."*
 - **RICHARD SIBBES:** "Prayer is a venting of our desires to God from the sense of our wants. . . A poor man, by the Spirit, earnestly pours out

supplications in Christ's name and wrestles with God in prayer." —
Richard Sibbes, Divine Meditations and Holy Contemplations, 59

- It seems Jacob is already converted at this point in Genesis 32, so you and I learn more than how to get the blessing of justification by laying hold of Christ. **We learn also in Genesis 32 how to get continued spiritual blessings of grace by going to God and making our requests known to Him in secret prayer.**

BOYS AND GIRLS, there are basically three different ways that believers pray.

- **I) There is *Public* prayer** (worship gatherings, member meetings, at some public event, in community groups).
- **II) There is *Family* prayer** (family worship, before meals).
- **III) There is *Secret* prayer** (when you or your mom or your dad get alone and spend time in prayer, just you and God). What we are primarily talking about today in Genesis 32 is Secret Prayer.

III. Supplication or Asking or Petitioning God is only one aspect of prayer, but it is the aspect we are focussing on in Genesis 32.

- Prayers should include Praise, not just Supplication.
- Prayers should include Thanksgiving, not just Asking.
- Prayers should include Confession of sin, not just Petitioning.
 - But Supplications/Asks/Petitions are warranted and crucial.

IV. QUESTION. What is prayer?

- **ANSWER. JOHN BUNYAN:** "Prayer is a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart or soul to God, through Christ, in the strength and assistance of the Holy Spirit, for such things as God has promised or, according to His word, for the good of the church with submission in faith to the will of God." — **John Bunyan, Prayer, 13**

CONTEXT. Fearful Jacob is soon going to meet strong Esau, whom he had previously betrayed. **Genesis 22:22** "The same night he arose and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven children (*sons*), and crossed the ford of the Jabbok."

DOCTRINE. Wrestling with God in prayer is most necessary for the life of a believer.

II. SIX TRUTHS ABOUT WRESTLING WITH GOD IN

PRAYER (Genesis 32:22-32).

- Now let me give you Six Truths about wrestling with God in prayer from Genesis 32.

I. WRESTLING WITH GOD IN PRAYER IS BEST DONE ALONE, IN SECRET (Gen. 32:23-24).

Genesis 32:23-24 "23 He (*Jacob*) took them (*his household*) and sent them across the stream, and everything else that he had. 24 And Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day."

- **Matthew 6:6** "But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."
 - **Matthew 14:23** "And after [Jesus] had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone,"
 - **Mark 1:35** "And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, [Jesus] departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed."
 - **Mark 6:46** "And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray."

II. WRESTLING WITH GOD IN PRAYER IS NOT SAFE, BUT IT IS GOOD (Gen. 32:25).

Genesis 32:25 "When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him."

- **BOYS AND GIRLS.**

Think of Mr. Beaver in C.S. Lewis's the Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe. Lucy asks, "Is He quite safe?" Mr. Beaver responds with, "Safe? Who said anything about safe? Course He isn't safe, but He's good."

- **HENRY:** "Note, Wrestling believers may obtain glorious victories, and yet come off with broken bones; for when they are weak then are they strong, weak in themselves, but strong in Christ, 2 Cor. 12:10."

You may seek a blessing and get a humbling, but you can trust that God will always give you what you need in Christ.

- **See the magnificence of the Lord Jesus Christ here!**
He is the omnipotent one who but touches the hip and it flies out of socket.
- **See also the condescension of God in Christ!**

He comes down, and though He could overpower Jacob at any moment, He wrestled with him and even lets Jacob overtake him.

III. WRESTLING WITH GOD IN PRAYER MEANS TO ENGAGE WITH HOLY VIOLENCE (*INTENSITY/FERVENCY*), PETITIONING HIM FOR A BLESSING (Gen. 32:26).

Genesis 32:26 "Then he said, 'Let me go, for the day has broken.' But Jacob said, 'I will not let you go unless you bless me.'"

- **Jacob is engaging in Holy Violence, much like is mentioned in Matthew 11:12:** "The kingdom of heaven [suffers] violence, and the violent take it by force."
- **Some may say,** "I do not like this talk about Holy Violence."
- **I would say to you,** "God does not like your lack of Holy Violence."

Isaiah 64:6-7

"6 We have all become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.
We all fade like a leaf,
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

7 There is no one who calls upon your name,
who rouses himself to take hold of you. . ."

- **Jacob received the blessing of his father Isaac by cunning, he received the blessing of Rachel through persevering hard work, but he was still a needy man, desperately desiring the blessing of the one true God—and he was willing to wrestle for it.**

USE FOR EXAMINATION.

- **Q. Are you willing to wrestle in prayer for a blessing for yourself and for others?**
- **THOMAS BROOKS:** "Cold prayers always freeze before they reach heaven."
 - **"Nevertheless, not my will but yours be done"** is not an excuse to refrain from wrestling with God in prayer; it is not an excuse to hold back from asking diligently for God to bless you or others.
 - **"Do your will" is not an appropriate prayer.** God will in fact accomplish His secret will whether you ask Him to or not.
 - **"Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" is not a petition which asks God to accomplish His secret will;** it is rather a petition which asks God to work in the minds and hearts of His image bearers so that they would obey His revealed will out of sincere love for God in Christ. Just as the angels and the saints made perfect obey the revealed will of God in heaven—that is what we are petitioning

God to accomplish on the earth when we pray "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

QUESTION. What are some blessings we should seek with holy violence and petition God for?

- I) **Pray for God's face to shine upon you, for you and others to know the love of God in Christ Jesus, not just intellectually but intimately** (Our Father in heaven).
- II) **Pray for God to save sinners** (Your kingdom come).
- III) **Pray for yours and others' Sanctification** (Your will be done).
- IV) **Pray for the Fruit of the Spirit to be produced in you and others** (Your will be done).
- V) **Pray that God would enable you and others to Obey His Law for His glory** (Your will be done).
- VI) **Pray that God would give you and others Assurance of salvation** (Your will be done).
- VII) **Pray that God would make you content with His providence** (Your will be done).
- VIII) **Pray for physical provision** (daily bread).
- IX) **Pray for a godly husband or wife** (daily bread).
- X) **Pray for godly children** (daily bread - "But the angel said to him, 'Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John'" **Luke 1:13**).
- XI) **Pray for forgiveness of yours and others sins** (forgive us our debts).
- XII) **Pray against temptation to sin** (keep us from the evil one - "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." **Matt. 26:41**).
- XIII) **Pray for protection from and defeat of both Christ's and our enemies** (keep us from the evil one).
- XIV) **Pray for those who are sick to be healed.**
- XV) **Pray for those who are suffering to be comforted by God the Holy Spirit.**
- XVI) **Pray for those who are straying to be corrected and brought back to faithfulness.**
- XVII) **Pray for those who are striving to be empowered to continue on for God's glory.**

IV. WRESTLING WITH GOD IN PRAYER SHOULD BE DONE WITH

CONFIDENCE, SEEING THAT GOD LOVES TO BLESS HIS PEOPLE (Gen. 32:27-29).

Genesis 32:27-29 "27 And he said to him, 'What is your name?' And he said, 'Jacob.' 28 Then he said, 'Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed.' 29 Then Jacob asked him, 'Please tell me your name.' But he said, 'Why is it that you ask my name?' And there he blessed him."

- **THOMAS FULLER:** "God wrested with Jacob with desire to be conquered."
- **Luke 12:32** "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."
 - **WILLIAM BRIDGE:** "A praying man can never be very miserable, whatever his condition be, for he has the ear of God; the Spirit within to indite, a Friend in heaven to present, and God Himself to receive his desires as a Father. It is a mercy to pray, even though I never receive the mercy prayed for."

God will give you what you ask Him for in prayer, believer, or He will give you what you would have asked Him for, if you knew what was best for His glory and your eternal good.

- **Ephesians 3:20-21** "Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

V. WRESTLING WITH GOD IN PRAYER MUST BE DONE WITH CHRIST AS YOUR MEDIATOR (Gen. 32:30).

Genesis 32:30 "So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, 'For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered.'"

- **HENRY:** "Observe, The name he gives to the place preserves and perpetuates, not the honour of his valour or victory, but only the honour of God's free grace. He does not say, "In this place I wrestled with God, and prevailed;" but, "In this place I saw God face to face, and my life was preserved;" not, "It was my praise that I came off a conqueror, but it was God's mercy that I escaped with my life." Note, It becomes those whom God honours to take shame to themselves, and to admire the condescensions of his grace to them."

VI. WRESTLING WITH GOD IN PRAYER IS NOT ABOUT CHANGING GOD, BUT YOU WILL FIND THAT HE DOES CHANGE YOU (Gen.

32:31-32).

Genesis 32:31-32 "31 The sun rose upon him as he passed Peniel, limping because of his hip. 32 Therefore to this day the people of Israel do not eat the sinew of the thigh that is on the hip socket, because he touched the socket of Jacob's hip on the sinew of the thigh."

- **JOSEPH HALL:** "But what a wonder is this! Jacob received not so much hurt from all his enemies, as from his best friend. Not one of his hairs perished by Laban or Esau, yet he lost a joint by the angel, and was sent halting to his grave. He that knows our strength, yet will wrestle with us for our exercise, and loves our violence and importunity."

6 USES FOR DIRECTION.

I) Set times to devote yourself to secret prayer, and make it feasible, given your station in life and where you are in your sanctification!

- **WILLIAM GURNALL:** "Pray often rather than very long at a time. It is hard to be very long in prayer, and not slacken in our affections."
- **Q. Do you want to be rewarded by your Father in heaven?** Then devote yourself to secret prayer.
 - **Matthew 6:6** "But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."
 - **THOMAS BROOKS:** "Ah! How often, Christians, hath God kissed you at the beginning of prayer, and spoken peace to you in the midst of prayer, and filled you with joy and assurance upon the close of prayer!"
- **Q. Do you have needs?** Then get in secret and make your requests known to your Father, in Christ's name.
 - **James 4:2-3** "You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions."

II) Praise, thank, and confess to God in prayer, but do not overlook Asking!

- **Philippians 4:6** "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."

III) Use the Lord's Prayer as your model for how and what to pray

(Matt. 6:9-13)!

- **Matthew 6:9** "Pray then like this. . ."

IV) Use the Psalms and other prayers recorded in the Scriptures to help you learn how to pray (Ps. 42:4).

- **Psalm 42:4.**
- Consider also getting books of the recorded prayers of believers in ages past. The Valley of Vision is a collection of Puritan Prayers worth your money and time.

V) Plead the promises of God in your prayers, asking Him to make good on them (Ps. 119:116).

- **Ps. 119:116.**
- **THOMAS MANTON:** "One way to get comfort is to plead the promise of God in prayer, show Him His handwriting; God is tender of His Word."

VI) Labor to be content with whatever the LORD does to you when you wrestle with Him in prayer (Phil. 4:11-14).

- You may get a dislocated hip, as it were; you may get a blessing; or you may get both and even find that the blessing is in both.

CONCLUSION.

- Christ does not tell Jacob His name, but rather shows Jacob His name. Immediately after Jacob asks the question, Christ bestows the blessing.
 - **Who is Christ?** He is the one who comes to crush the head of the serpent and bless all the nations of the earth by His mercy!

This once crucified, now resurrected Christ says,

"Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other" (**Is. 45:22**). "Blessed are all who take refuge in Him" (**Ps. 2:12**).