

April 9th

FACING A BRUTAL PAST

"I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps. Please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, that he may come and attack me, the mothers with the children."

GENESIS 32:10-11

A Christ follower named Augustine of Hippo made the following statement: "We count on God's mercy for our past mistakes, on God's love for our present needs, on God's sovereignty for our future." Men, this quote rings true in all our ears. If we are honest with ourselves and others, we have made many mistakes that God has used to teach us. God's mercy shouts to us in our desperation and His love overpowers our weak efforts to atone for our sin. His sovereign direction over our lives gives comfort and perspective, even when we struggle to see it. Jacob is no different than us here in Genesis 32.

After twenty years, Jacob has finally found freedom from his toxic father-in-law. While Laban's words to him at the end of Genesis 31 were probably meant as a curse, you can't help but wonder if Jacob had a wry smile on his face as he left Laban early the next morning. Jacob is finally free! But there's more work to be done. Now he must face the twenty-year fight between him and Esau. At first glance, his message to Esau doesn't strike us as significant. However, when we understand the geography of the land, we learn much from Jacob's actions here. Esau is all the way in the South, towards Edom. Jacob can return to his homeland without contacting Esau or running into him. Instead, he sends a message to Esau that he is coming to give restitution for his sins against his brother. God's time with Jacob for twenty-years has not been wasted. He has been humbled and seen God protect him. He is ready to make things right, but it's not all that it seems.

Did you read Esau's reaction here? The messengers come back to Jacob with haunting news: Esau is coming towards him with four hundred men! Men, this is the standard size of a militia. It probably appears to Jacob's messengers and definitely appears to Jacob that Esau is ready to exact his revenge. Jacob's response here teaches us a lesson. Jacob takes steps to divide his camp, but most importantly, he prays.

Men, Jacob's prayer teaches us something here. Many of us struggle to pray. If someone asked us to describe our prayer time with God, we would often apologize for how weak it is. Jacob's prayer encourages us. Did you notice what he starts and ends with? Go back to the prayer and check it out. He starts and ends with the very words of God. God doesn't need to be reminded about what He already said. But thinking about what God has said gives a prayer encouragement. God will accomplish His purposes because He is faithful. Secondly, Jacob humbles himself before God and asks God to deliver him. These are simple words but shatter our ideas of prayer. These words by Jacob are direct and not sandwiched in between fancy words. Instead, he comes with short praise, humility, and request. Men, God wants our hearts. Want to have deeper connection with God this month? Pray simply and honestly before our King. He loves to hear His kids talk to Him. Why not commit this month to being more purposeful when you talk with God?

Spend some time reflecting on your prayer life in 2026. How would you describe it to someone else? Write down some practical ways that you can learn from Jacob's simple prayer.

For Further Reading: Luke 18:9-14