

Blessing of a face

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Date: 11 October 2020

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[0 : 0 0] all right turn with me to genesis 32 starting at verse 22 the same night he arose and took his two wives his two female servants and his eleven children and crossed the ford of the jabbok he took them and sent them across the stream and everything else that he had and jacob was left alone and a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day 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 then he said let me go for the day has broken but jacob said i will not let you go unless you bless me and he said to him what is your name and he said jacob 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 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 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 the sun rose upon him as he passed peniel limping because of his hip 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 and jacob lifted up his eyes and looked and behold esau was coming and four hundred men with him so he divided the children among leah and rachel and the two female servants and he put the servants with their children in front then leah with her children and rachel and joseph last of all he himself went on before them bowing himself to the ground seven times until he came nearer to his brother but esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him and they wept and when esau lifted up his eyes and saw the women and children he said who are these with you jacob said the children whom god has graciously given your servant then the servants drew near they and their children and bowed down leah likewise and her children drew near and bowed down and last joseph and rachel drew near and they bowed down esau said what do you mean by all this company that i met jacob answered to find favor in the side of my lord but esau said i have enough my brother keep what you have for yourself jacob said no please if i have found favor in your sight then accept my present from my hand for i have seen your face which is like seeing the face of god and you have accepted me please accept my blessing that is brought to you because god has dealt graciously with me and because i have enough thus he urged him and he took it so this will be the last of the jacob series the title is blessing of a face this title is taken from

a novel written by c.s lewis till we have faces this novel uses the life of a woman who was born ugly very ugly as an illustration as an illustration she was a princess who would eventually become a good king because of her ugly look when she was young and before she got she never got married because she's too ugly when she needed to come to before her own father the king she needed to cover her face and that's how ugly she was um there's a lot in that novel even though it's a short novel i like it it's hard to read but i like reading it every time i write it i learn something and this novel describes the struggles in our hearts our longing for acceptance most of us know that we are not attractive to others even though we hope we will be but deep in our heart we know that we are not and we sometimes fear get getting too close to people because we do not want to reveal our weakness or weakness so in order to be accepted we need to cover up ourselves we cover up with makeups or clothing expressions our achievements jokes or sacrifices so in the word face the word face in hebrews appears about 20 times in genesis 32 and 33 if you if you read it in hebrews today in sharing jacob's struggle with having a face i hope we can see our own struggle for faces we shall pray before we start father we can come before you as you are the judge of our secrets we can come before you and talk about your word and descend to you and sing to you so because of your grace and we ask that you might help us through this portion of your word that we would see the lord jesus christ in a clearer way and come before you with an open heart with open hearts knowing that you do see our secrets and we have nowhere to hide and we thank you for the hope that we

have in christ may you bless us as we go through this sermon we ask in jesus name amen so the word face has two major meanings one is our physical appearance and one the other is our identity our significance our self-worth we are related because we consider the more attractive a person's physical appearance is the more worthy of that person getting admiration and that's why the face has got these two meanings in in chinese language there are actually two words for these two meanings of face for appearance is nian means the physical appearance man means the self-worth the self the significance or honor of a person to a chinese person man is very important in life maybe most important it represents not only the honor of the person but also his family his clan clan his people that was why china was so offended when australian government pushed for the investigation of covid19 it was a vote of no confidence in the way chinese government handled the pandemic in china itself many chinese people were not happy with their own government as well in terms of how they handled the pandemic but they now stood behind the government because the face of the whole country is being threatened by a foreign country and to the chinese they would rather not to have australian beef or milk or coal but they can't lose their face and that's so how important the face is and this this uh thing is not going to go away until either australian government backs down and apologize or until this generation of leaders die out and the new generation come come come out so this would be a long ongoing uh saga in terms of this uh diplomacy diplomatic uh problem and that is how face is so important and and you can see the chinese government just responded disproportionately with the all the extreme measures they are using at the moment today we come to a turning point in jacob's life since he was young jacob wanted to have a face for himself he wanted respect from his father his brother and now as he's working with his uncle he wanted respect from the uncle and the brothers that's why he worked very hard he he he wanted to prove that he's he's worthy of the respect he went to accumulate as much wealth as possible however the wealthier he he became the more hostile his uncle and cousins were towards him in the bible actually it says that their face turned against him because they they thought that or they considered uh jacob taking all the wealth from the family but jacob did not dare to to leave the place because he knew that the uncle would not let him go or the family go because laban knew that it was only through jaco that he became so wealthy as too he knew that god was with jacob so as time dragged on after when 20 years came god told jacob to go home jacob didn't know how to go home he just did what he knew best so he fled just like when he first did when he left home and he didn't tell his his father-in-law his uncle and so he took his family all his possessions and left nabam was somewhere else at that time when he it took three days before neighbor knew about it and nabam was very very angry and he took all his men to chase after them and caught up with them jacob in seven days in genesis 31 43 to 44 which we didn't read uh laban said to jacob the daughter are my daughters the children are my children the flocks are my flocks and all that you see is mine but what can i do this day for this my daughters or for their children whom they have born come now let us make a covenant you and i and let it be a witness between you and me laban said this to jacob after he failed to find his idol which he accused jacob of stealing so when he was chasing jacob and when he caught up with jacob jacob asked why you chase after us his first uh laban's first excuse was that you stole my idol my idol got missing so jacob said well you you can search anybody who's found to have that idol will be put to death actually rachel uh jacob's beloved why did steal that idol we we are not told why she did that maybe the she thought the idol was the fact the the the uh the god that blessed them or maybe he she she knew that his father liked that idol very much and she just wanted to uh took it away from the father because he she hated the father i'm not we are not sure why but she stole it but when when she heard that jacob said the one who was found to have it will be put to death she she hit it under her seat and that's why neighbor couldn't find it and after he couldn't find it laban said what i just read to you to jacob uh instead of apologizing to jacob say sorry i i i yeah i uh accused you wrongly he didn't he he basically said that in fact jacob why what you have now are all mine you have stolen them all from me in a way it could be true because when jacob went to naven he he had nothing just by himself now he had lots and lots of animals servants and family but on the other hand laban also himself became very rich because of jacob and he forgot that and just consider all that jacob had was his laban could not apologize because he needed to protect his face he couldn't do that in front of his people he needed to maintain the respect from others when jacob was fleeing from his brother esau 20 years ago god appeared to him and jacob make a pile of stones to mark the place where god gave him a promise god promised jacob that he would be with jacob and would bring him back to to that land and the great nation nation will come from him and in him and

his offspring all the families of the earth will bless god's promise to jacob was one-sided jacob did not need to contribute anything to that promise and now on his way back to his homeland jacob made another power of stones this time at the request of laban never wanted to have covenant with jacob because nabam feared jacob because nabam knew that god was with jacob and then god did warn nabam the night before to not to harm jacob and nabam being a cunning person he didn't want jacob to come back to take revenge on him later and that's why he said let us make this covenant together well jacob didn't actually need to agree with that he he didn't need to do anything i mean for for nabam here done enough but to give nabam face he did that covenant with nabam and that power stone mark the separation of jacob and nabam nabam or the separation of jacob from the world so for 20 years they lived and worked together nabam who was being bullied by nabam had become more godly and nabam was the bully who the bully had become more and more self-centered nabam so jacob finally completed his training under the operation of nabam but in today's story jacob is about to face a much greater challenge so as jacob and his family went toward jacob's homeland the angels of god met him and this gave jacob some encouragement to keep going knowing that god was with him he sent messengers ahead of him to inform esau that he was coming back the messenger returned to tell jacob that esau was coming to meet him with 400 men and at that point jacob lost his courage the bible said

he was greatly afraid and distressed why would esau took take five 400 men with him i mean the conclusion is uh iso wants to revenge and so uh in response to his fear he divided his people and flocks into two camps hoping that at least one of the camps who survived esau's attack and he prepared three groups of gifts for esau they are lavish gifts of possibly more than 1 000 animals most of his possessions maybe at the same time he also prayed and we read that in the bible and when we read his read his prayer then we could see that jacob has matured because when he went because when he pray he pray according to god's promise no longer pray according to his own thinking and that is a sign of uh maturity but then why was jacob so afraid did god not promise him that god would be with him did he did he forget that the two camps of angel were with him did he not trust god i think the answer is not because jacob had not grown in his knowledge of god it was exactly because he knew god better now one of the consequences of knowing god for jacob was knowing his own sinfulness 20 years ago he would not have thought twice about cheating esau or his father isaac now his deception has become a fault in his heart he feared that he feared that he feared uh esau may kill him he feared the loss of his families his people his properties but what he feared the most is to face esau he did not have a face to see esau when he stole esau's blessing all he wondered was to become significant and secure through the blessing now that he knew the god who is behind the blessing he realized that no blessing could make him significant and secure if he was under the judgment of god he was afraid of esau not so much because he did not trust god but because he understood that god was the judge of all the earth how could he expect the righteous god to help him to face esau when he was the party who was at fault as the distance between esau and him was decreasing jacob's guilt and fear was increasing jacob did not know how to face esau he sent the first camp ahead of them at the same night he was planning to cross the river with his family in dark in the darkness but he could not make himself cross the river he told his family to walk ahead while he stayed on this side of the river to gather his courage this day become a whole night of wrestling for him god came to wrestle with jacob until the breaking of the day jacob might not know who he was wrestling with at the beginning as he wrestled on he found that his opponent was not there to defeat him but just to wrestle with him and what is going on here the bible did not does not explain it clear for us i will try to explain what was going on in jacob's heart with the physical wrestling jacob was also having spiritual wrestling with his guilt his fear and his identity at the beginning jacob would try to justify himself he would think esau was the one who's who sold me his birthright am i not the rightful honor of the blessing or him i think my father was partial in his love it was his fault that

[20 : 17] i deceived him then jacob would think of all the criticisms he had towards his father and brother he also thought of the many times he took his mother's love for granted he thought of the many times he considered himself a better person than others he tried to justify his views about others and himself but his opponent kept bringing up memories of his double standards towards others and himself after a night of wrestling jacob began to despair seeing how wicked and weak he was he could not even face esau how could he face god the judge of all the earth how could he be the one who would bring god's blessing to other people he was sinking into the darkness of his hopelessness when god interrupted his thoughts by dislocating dislocating one of his hip joints the

sudden jolt of pain woke jacob up and directed his attention to the one who was wrestling with him his opponent his opponent crippled him so effortlessly he could have easily subdued jacob from the start jacob realized that he was facing someone who was far greater and nobler than he could ever was jacob was like a drowning man who suddenly realized that the person who was wrestling with him was trying to rescue him he held on to this person with all his strength and he begged for blessing this time jacob was not thinking about being successful he was asking for acceptance he was asking for purity he was asking for forgiveness god asked him what is your name jacob answer with his head bow low i'm jacob i'm a deceiver i do not have a face to see you god said your name shall no longer be called jacob but israel because you have gone through struggles with man and with god and you have learned from these struggles what have jacob learned he will have learned at least four things i think he will have learned that winning at the expense of kindness and goodness would turn him into someone like his uncle or father-in-law laban he would have learned that even he could win the whole world he would still not find rest in his heart and he would learn that he was not that clever or good after all and he would have learned that god who promised to be with him was trustworthy and good so in a sense in a sense god was telling jacob so long as you think you are right and want to justify yourself so long as you always want to save your own face you will remain jacob the moment you confess that you do not have any good in you and you do not have any face to save and that god is the one who can justify you your israel jacob asked god please tell me your name god said did i not just tell you that you have striven with god why do you ask my name i am who i am i define all things i define you you do not define me nothing can define me and there god blessed him so jacob called the name of the place peniel peniel face of god peniel saying for i have seen god face to face and yet my life has been delivered the sun rose upon him as he passed peniel limping because of his of his hip 20 years ago when the when he was fleeing from his

brother isa the sun set on him and god appeared for to him for the first time now the sun rose upon him isaac was no longer jacob he was israel he had seen god face to face and was accepted by god god had crippled him he could not run away from esau now but jacob was free he was free from self-reliance he was free from self-justification god had justified him god had given him a face jacob was so free that he could laugh all his way to face esau and his 400 men so that was my poor attempt to give you an idea what was going on in jacob's heart during the wrestling you may ask why did jacob not tell us what happened i think there are two important reasons why jacob did not tell others what happened reason number one deep experiences cannot be expressed in words like the psalmist we can only use songs and music to try to express such experiences so the moment we try to express something deep in words it will make it less less significant or less so just like god forbid israelites to make image of him because the moment we make an image of god it will make we represent god so if we try to try to share what we have experienced we could never share it fully or so there's one reason some experiences just cannot be expressed in words secondly deep experiences do not need to be expressed we might need we might like to tell people about our encounters with god usually with the intention to gain faith for ourselves in this experience jacob was given a faith by god so he therefore did not need to boast about this to other people and you will find that in the old testament but because when uh the story is written about people they usually write about all the foolish things or the wrong thing that they did very seldom that is mentioned about godly things uh because they would not want to if they tell the story they would only tell people how foolish or bad they were they would not want to uh tell people how good they were this because they have met god these people how how do we know jacob had a life-changing experience with god there are also two reasons first one is his response to the encounter second one is the subsequent change in his behavior jacob did not quite understand why he was still alive after he saw god face to face jacob must have seen the holy god for him to wonder why he was still alive when the prophet isaiah saw god he said woe is me for i am gone for i am a man of unclean lips this is the appropriate response when the sinner face faces the holy god that is knowing his own unworthiness so this is the response of someone who has seen god knowing that he's not worthy to to keep living in front of the holy god and we will see jacob's behavior changing behavior and he's meeting up with his brother esau as jacob saw his brother he saw approaching with 400 men he walked to the front of his family he did not hide behind his family family anymore he faced esau and his men himself he bowed himself to the ground seven times what was jacob doing he was returning the blessing he stole from

esau he gave he saw his wealth and honor which were promised in the blessing that jacob stole going back to genesis 32 20 we will see that you see what jacob was thinking with all his gifts in genesis 22 32 32 32 verse 20 he says for he thought i might appease him with the present that goes ahead of me and afterwards i shall see his face perhaps he will accept me the natural translation of this word is for he thought i will wipe the anger from his face with the gift that goes ahead of my face afterwards when i see his face perhaps he will lift up my face so there are four faces in that same words but to make it easier to understand the translator just translated one of the face faces in the english so before wrestling with god jacob was hoping that his gift would turn esau's angry face into an acceptance accepting face so that he might have a face to stand before esau so now he was not only giving esau his wealth he was giving esau his face as well as he bowed before esau seven times in front of his own people and esau's people so that is a very big deal is giving wealth is something really difficult giving your honor to someone that you don't actually like is another thing uh is it's a sign that uh jacob repented said that he he shouldn't have stolen the the blessing and he give this honor back to esau esau might have expected jacob to boast about his wealth and power but he did not expect jacob would bow before him esau ran and embraced jacob and they wept together by god's grace the hatred between these two brothers melted away in their tears those are those are tears of regrets tears of relief tears of sorrow tears of joy this there's so much in that itself that covers all their lives until that point so after that esau wanted to decline jacob's gift saying that he himself had enough to live on jacob said this was the blessing that should have been esau's he said god has dwelt uh had to dwell graciously with him and he had enough no actually jacob did not say he had enough even though the translation was that he had enough in chapter 33 verse 11.

in hebrews esau said he had enough that's rob r-a-b but jacob said he had everything called k-o-l this is the freedom of someone who had been given a face by god jacob did not care if esau took his properties his reputation even his life because he had been accepted by god and so jacob said i have everything even though he was actually giving he saw almost all of his properties in in returning sort of the for the the blessing that he stole galatians 6 verses 14 to 16 the apostle paul said but far be it from me to both except in the cross of our lord jesus christ by which the world has been crucified to me and i to the world for neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision but a new creation and as for all who walk by this rule peace and mercy be upon them upon the israel of god paul took pride in his pedigree as a pure jew he took pride in his achievement as a pharisee he persecuted the church at the beginning because he wanted to show his religious zeal and also because his boast in his pedigree and achievement was threatened by the cross the message of the cross says that while our pedigree and achievements may impress the world they do not impress god the more you try to set your face before god the more you display your pride the message of the cross says that jesus christ has done all that is required for god to give you a faith when god understood when paul understood the message of the cross he said he counted all his pedigree and achievements as rubbish because he had been given a faith in christ he parted with the world in the cross the cross became a pile of stones in which reminds paul he's being accepted by god and and also to mark the part of his holy life and him being a new creation paul said that those who boast in the achievement will not find peace and mercy only those who boast in the cross of the lord jesus christ will find peace and mercy and those who boast in the cross are the true israel of god not those who were born as jews would you look at the lord jesus christ as paul had done the bible does not tell us much about jesus physical appearance but it tells us a lot about jesus identity and significance in john 1 14 it says and the word became flesh and dwell among us and we have seen his glory glory as of the only son from the father full of grace and truth we have seen his face as as jesus wrestled with god before he went to the cross to face the wrath of god he was wrestling like jacob who was facing the judgment of god but he was not wrestling because of his own sin he was wrestling because of my sin and your sin he suffered the judgment of god and went through death so that we might be given a face to stand before god so that what is waiting for us on the other side of the river is no longer judgment but acceptance would you look at the lord jesus christ may god who said let light shine out of darkness shine in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of god in the face of jesus christ let us pray father we thank you for the hope that we have through your word

when we struggle in the darkness the darkness of our hearts we thank you for struggling with us and coming to show us the light in the lord jesus christ oh help us to trust in him and look upon him and to know the grace is awaiting us thank you father in jesus we pray amen also from this as why

is you you
[36 : 42] Thank you.