

Takeaways from a Wrestling Match with God

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[0:00] Go ahead and turn your Bibles over to Genesis chapter 32. I've entitled the lesson, Takeaways from a Wrestling Match. I've just been studying the life of Jacob.

! Where Jacob is, where we'll find him this morning.

Go ahead and stand with me, if you will. We'll start reading in chapter 32, verse 24. The Bible says, And Jacob was left alone, and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. 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, and he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh.

And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. 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.

[1:14] For as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. 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. And as he passed over Peniel, 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, and the sinew that shrank. Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, I just thank you for this opportunity that we have to come to your house and worship you. Lord, I just, I thank you, Lord, for everyone who's here.

Lord, I just ask that our heart would be open to what you have for us this morning. I pray that you would calm my nerves and guide my tongue and just bring to memory everything I've studied.

[2:18] I thank you and I love you. In Jesus' name, amen. You can go ahead and be seated. As you read through scripture, you find out about Jacob. He was a worker, and he stayed busy.

He was constantly working. And I think one interesting trait about him, and I think this is interesting in a lot of characters in the Bible, because one thing about scripture is that it doesn't shy away from people's flaws.

And I'm thankful for that, because I've had many. And if God can use them, he can use me. And I think one thing that makes Jacob extraordinary is he had a responsive cord in his heart to what God had for him.

You know, it's ironic where we find Jacob 20 years previous to where we find him in scripture. He's running away from his brother Esau. He had stolen the birthright.

He had cheated his brother out of a blessing. And Esau said, I'm going to kill him. And so he ran. The Bible says all he had was a staff. And he took off. And he goes to Laban.

[3:17] His mom says, go to Laban, my brother, and stay there. And when your brother's wrath is gone, I'll come and get you, and it'll be safe. So for 20 years, Jacob is with his uncle Laban.

And now we see that he's fleeing from Laban, and he's going to be running right into Esau. We see in this text here, the Bible says in verse 24, that he was left alone.

And I was thinking, we can't run from our past, our mistakes. They don't forget us. They're going to catch up with us one of these days. And Jacob is in this point.

He's alone. He's scared. You know, earlier in this chapter, he's trying to make a plan. See, Jacob's name, it means heel grabber.

The Bible says that Esau was born first. He was red and hairy. And they said, hey, he's red and hairy. We'll just call him Esau. And then it says that Jacob was holding on to Esau's thigh when he was born.

[4:17] And they're like, well, isn't that cute? He's a little heel grabber. That's what we'll call him, heel grabber. Jacob. Jacob's whole life, he was a heel grabber. That means he trips people up.

He schemes. He bargains. He does whatever he can to get his way. You know, I know I've been guilty of that in my own life. And I'm sure many of you have as well.

We find Jacob here. He's being left alone. He had already had a game plan. He knows he's going to run into his brother Esau. He's scared for his life.

Esau, he believes Esau is going to kill him and take everything he has. And if you read the chapter before, Jacob has a lot of stuff. He's got four wives, 11 children.

He's got plenty of flocks, men servants, maid servants. He's got a lot. And he's scared that Esau is going to come kill him and take it all. The reason Jacob is scared is because he knows what he did was wrong.

[5:15] So he's scared. The Bible says earlier that he has his messengers. And he says, hey, this is what you're going to do. You're going to travel, go see Esau. Tell him that his servant, Jacob, has these gifts for him.

Tell him to take it. Try to smooth it over before I get there. And he plans it all out. That he'll have one wave first and then another wave. That way, if that wave gets attacked and Esau is angry, he's got time to run.

The Bible actually tells us later that he has it all set up where he sets up his handmade wives first. He says, if anyone takes them out, we'll have an opportunity to run. The Bible says he even has Leah, his ugly wife.

She's up there. And then he can escape with the pretty wife, Rachel, if anything happens. You know, this is how he's scheming. He's planning. You know, he's a prince of God. God has promised, I'll be with you.

I'll watch you. And here he is scheming. We find him alone. And sometimes when we're in a wrestling match, God puts us there because he's trying to get a hold of us.

[6:19] Trying to get our attention. You know, you read all through scripture people who God had said, I need you to do this. And what do they do? Their own thing. They try to do their own thing.

You know, one of the most famous stories is Jonah, right? God said, go to Nineveh. Jonah said, no thanks. I hate those guys. I'm going this way to Tarshish.

What happens? God had a whale ready to swallow him up. You know, sometimes when I was little, I was like, yep, that's a punishment. But you know what? God was just saying, you know, think about this.

If Jonah had been thrown over and there wasn't a whale, what would have happened? He probably would have eventually drowned. You know, God had that whale there for a purpose. To guide him back to what he wants.

This text here, verse 24 of our text, it says, And he rose up that night and he took his two wives and his two women servants and his 11 sons and passed over the Ford Jabbok.

[7:18] So he was already asleep. It says he rose up that night. Have you ever had that where you're worrying so much about something you just can't sleep? You're thinking, how am I going to make ends meet?

What about this situation I'm in? I'm just scared about it. You can't sleep. That's where he is. He's so afraid that he's like, you know what we're going to do? Because I want my family to be safe.

We're going to cross this river at night.

This river Jabbok. He doesn't know it, but this word Jabbok in Hebrew, it means an emptying out. A pouring out. That's what Jacob's going to do here in a little bit. He took them and he sent them over the brook and sent over that he had.

And now he's left alone. Sometimes God wrestles with us because he wants to get us alone so we can center on him. That's my first point. So we can center on him. Jacob couldn't sleep.

He was anxious. He's operating in unbelief. You know, it's interesting. Once Jacob got rid of the cares of this world, you know, he separated himself first off from Laban, who was a worldly man.

[8:21] He had idols that he served. He separated himself from that. He separated himself from his family and the business of the flocks and everything.

You know, I think of work. Sometimes we get so caught up with work that we forget what's going on. We separate ourselves from that. We just need some quiet time so we can focus on what God has for us. You know, in verse 20, or I'm sorry, chapter 28 of Genesis, chapter 28, verse 12, we're going

to just see a couple of things that God promised to Jacob.

Chapter 28, verse 12 says, Let's look over to chapter 31.

Starting in verse 3, it says, And the Lord said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers and thy kindred, and I will be with thee.

Look at verse 7 there. And your father hath deceived me and changed my wages ten times, but God suffered him not to hurt me. Verse 24, And God said to Laban, This is Jacob's uncle.

[10:10] He's upset. He's going to go take a posse and follow Jacob. And it says, And the Syrian in a dream by night and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob, either good or bad.

You know, I do believe Laban had some hurt intended for Jacob. But then he gets there. Jacob and him talk it out. Jacob says, Hey man, you cheated me.

And I was still faithful to you. I'm taking what's owed. And I'm going. And they end up fellowshipping. They make a vow to each other that they're not going to hurt each other.

You know, and he was very bold in that. And now we see he's afraid. He's afraid of Esau. You know, so many times we have the benefit of seeing the rest of the story.

But Jacob doesn't see that yet. He's still in that wrestling match. He's scared of the Esau in his life.

You know, how many times are we so focused on the Esau that we don't see anything else?

[11:09] You know, he's scared because his mom said, I'll come and get you when everything is good. I'll come and get you when his anger is gone. Well, his mom died. She's never come and got him.

So in his mind, he's still thinking, he's still angry and I have to go by. He's going to get me. You know, he's going to kill me. He's going to take my wives, put them into slavery. He's going to take my sons.

He'll probably kill them. He'll take everything I've worked these last 20 years for. It's all going to be for nothing. And God tells him, I'm with you. Earlier in our text, verse 32, or chapter 32, starting reading verse 1, it says, That kind of means two camps.

Jacob had his camp and God had his host of angels. You know, how easy is it? You know, how many times have we read about the children of Israel? God performs a miracle and then they start complaining.

And if you're like me, you're like, what a bunch of idiots. You know, if he took you out of Egypt, he got you through the Red Sea, he's going to take care of you. He promises he will. And they immediately, oh, God has forsaken us.

[12:23] It would be better to be a slave back in Egypt. How many times do we do that? God says, you know, I have plans for you. And we immediately, oh no, he can't take care of it.

You know, he's not big enough. We focus on the Esau, but we miss what God is trying to do. The will of God will never lead us where the power of God can't protect and provide for us.

You know, God allows trials to shape us to his image. Ephesians chapter 1, turn there real quick. Verse 11.

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

God already knows these things. Let's turn to Romans chapter 8. Many of us could probably quote this verse. Romans chapter 8, verse 28.

[13:22] And we'll read verse 29. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

The beginning of Psalm 46.10 says, Be still and know that I am God. Sometimes we just need to be in a quiet place, alone, so we can hear God.

The second thing I see here in this text, not only does God's purposes in our trials is to center us on him, but to cultivate perseverance.

You know, as I was reading this, I was thinking to myself, why now is God trying to get a hold of Jacob? You know, why did God allow 20 years of Laban cheating him? If you are familiar with that account, Jacob says, Hey, Laban, I'm your sister's son.

I'm supposed to camp out here. And I see this girl, Rachel, and I like her, and I want to marry her. And Laban's like, Sounds good to me. Let's make it happen. So he says, Here's what I want you to do.

[14:36] You work seven years for me, and you can marry Rachel. The Bible says that Jacob's love for Rachel was so much that seven years, it just seemed like a couple of days to him. The time comes, they get married, and guess what?

It's not Rachel. It's Leah. Jacob is upset about that. And you know what Laban says? I don't know where you're from, but here in this country, the firstborn has the preference.

You know, it's ironic, because what did Jacob do? He stole that firstborn from his brother. So Laban said, If you want to marry Rachel, same deal. You work for me for seven years, and you can have her.

You know, that wasn't ideal. And if you read Scripture and you find out, Rachel was not on the same page with Jacob spiritually. She stole her father's idols. And who came from Leah?

Christ. You know, that's pretty interesting. That was something, you know, Rachel gets a lot of attention for being beautiful, but Leah was the one that she was closest to Jacob.

[15:38] You know, why now? Why does God allow this trial now? And I think it's because he gives us grace. You know, that's one thing I've had to learn a lot of. It's easy to question God, right?

Why are you allowing this to happen? You know, you allowed this person to do this to me, and why is this allowed? Because God's grace. You know, for me, anyway, there's somebody in my past, they hurt me big time.

And I would question, why did God allow that to happen? Well, you know what? God gives them grace just like he gives me grace. And humanly speaking, I think, I'm not as bad as that guy.

So if God is willing to give that guy that much grace, how much more grace is he willing to give me? James 1 forces, but let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

God wants our endurance to mature us in our walk with him. You know, think about, we're talking about wrestling. Wrestling. I remember doing that with my dad.

[16:44] We have videos. My brother and I, he's on his back. He's holding one of us up. You know, each of our feet are here, and he's holding us here.

And then on his feet, he's pushing another one, and we're running, we're having a good time. And I got to thinking about wrestling. You know, as a kid, what did wrestling teach me?

My dad also used to wrestle, and he taught us some things as we grew up. But first off, wrestling teaches accountability for failures and successes.

You know, you have to work hard. If you ask wrestlers, you know, if they lose, they can probably tell you, oh, maybe I didn't train enough, maybe I didn't do that. And if they won, they said, well, this is what I did. I saw this weakness.

I exposed it. You know, there's accountability. There's mental fortitude. Sometimes you have to push through exhaustive work, and you have to push through when you're facing adversity.

[17:43] You know, I can remember, this was when I was younger, but my dad, you know, he used to do this thing. Maybe some of you dads have done this. But he's straddled over me.

He's got my arms raised up above my head. He'd maybe lift my shirt up and start giving me a pink belly. And then he'd do the whole, you know, and I'm like, and he'd start, and I'm like, oh no, gross.

You know, but it taught me, you know, sometimes you have to push through things you don't like.

You know, he kind of roughed us a little bit, but it taught us discipline, sacrifice, how to delay gratification.

You know, if you want to win, there's constant effort put in there. You can't just win just because you show up. You have to put some work in, you know, and if you want to win, that means not only on the day of the match, you got to be ready, but there's preparation all the way up to that time where you're sacrificing.

You're trying to stay in shape, do what you need to. There is humility. Again, humility, talking about some intense personal space. You know, you're wrestling, you're all on top of each other, you're sweaty.

[18:48] That was one thing that used to really gross me out. My dad would be over me and then his sweat is dropping on me and I'm like, oh, oh, oh. You know, you're vulnerable. You know, you're really close. You know, it can be gross, but it also, it taught me trust.

You know, in those times, he wasn't punishing me, but he was pushing me. He wanted me to be tough. He wanted me not to be a quitter. You know, so many times we have Christians that are like, oh, if this is how it's going to be, being a Christian, then I'm going to be done.

You know, I don't know, obviously it was a lie from Satan, but people who believe that being a Christian is just going to be all peaches and cream, oh man, don't believe that. The Bible says you're going to be persecuted. You're going to be tried. The Bible says, you know, Paul writes, he was knocked down on every side. He's being attacked. You know, especially if you're called for some purpose, you're going to be attacked.

Life isn't going to be fun. This is where that wrestling comes in. God doesn't want quitters. Psalm 51:10 says, create in me a clean heart, oh God, and renew a right spirit within me.

[19:56] You know, sometimes we need that. With my daughter, Sophia, I'll wrestle around with her. You know, I pick her up, kind of toss her into the couch. We wrestle.

You know, what that does is it shows her some trust, you know, but it also gives her some security. You know, in her little mind, I'm Superman. You know, I can defeat everybody.

You know, that's the kind of idea that we need to have with our heavenly father. You know, we sing it when we're little kids. My God is so great, so strong, and so mighty.

He can take care of the Esau's in our life. Number three, this wrestling match. Let's turn to verse 25. It says, And when he saw, that's Jacob, that he prevailed, or I'm sorry, verse 24, And Jacob was left alone, and there wrestled the man with him until the breaking of the day.

It 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, and he wrestled with him. Verse 26, And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh.

[21:01] And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. The third thing God wants us to see in our trials is acknowledge our weakness and acknowledge our need for him.

You know, it doesn't matter how big of arms you got as a wrestler. Your source of strength are your legs, your hips, your back. You know, God removed Jacob's physical strength when he touched his thigh.

You know, I think it's interesting. They're wrestling for a long time, like all night long. This is six, eight hours. You know, it would have been easy enough for God just to be like, touch, you know, you're done.

But he didn't. He wrestles with him. It says, Because we know that this angel is God, and when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh.

Jacob continued to wrestle. Then it says, God says, Let me go, for the day breaketh. You know, it was kind of like, Dude, you lost. Let go.

[22:02] And Jacob is clinging on to him at this point. He says, I am not going to let you go until you bless me. You know, Jacob's source of strength physically was that thigh, but his source of strength spiritually was he's a schemer.

That's how he gets his way. You know, the Bible tells us early on that he, his brother Esau comes in, and his brother, kind of being dramatic, he's like, I'm going to die. I'm going to die unless you give me some food.

And Jacob says, Well, what's it worth to you? I'll give you some food, but you give me your birthright. Esau really thought he was going to die. Makes that trade. Later on, his mother hears that Isaac is going to go against God and bless Esau instead of Jacob, which that was wrong, but they weren't on the same page.

Very dysfunctional family. So she tells Jacob, Trust me, we're going to disguise you as your brother because your father is blind. He can't see, and we're going to have him bless you. So Jacob puts on, this is how hairy Esau was.

He puts on the skin of like baby goats. That's hairy. So Esau was a hairy guy. He goes in, and if you know the account, Esau, or Isaac is like, Well, you smell like Esau, and you got hands like Esau, but you sound like Jacob.

[23:23] And Jacob says, Oh, trust me. It's me. He gets the blessing. He runs out. You know, he's with his uncle Laban, and Laban's like, Well, what's going to be fair for me to pay you?

And Jacob says, Here, I have all of the kind of the ugly cows and the ugly sheep in your flock. You know, why don't you just give them to me? I'll take the ugly ones. You keep the ones that are pure colors, and I'll take the ugly ones.

No big deal. And Laban's like, Oh, sounds great. Well, Jacob knew enough about how to breed the animals. He comes up with a plan, and all of a sudden, all of the goats and the cows, they're all coming out ring-straked or spotted.

Jacob does really well. You know, he's a schemer. He likes to get things his way. That was his source of strength. You know, for us, our source of strength might include intelligence. You know, you think about some really intelligent people. You know, one of the most intelligent people that was in our lifetime, right, was Stephen Hawking, right? People thought he was so smart. [24 : 31] And look where he was, in a chair, his body deformed. I'm not saying that this is the case, but maybe God was like, okay, I have to take away some strength from you.

Maybe you can keep that intellect, which we know he was wrong in a lot of things, because that's not, goes against Scripture. You know, but what about your physical body?

You know, there's been people who that was their, their center of focus was their physical body.

God can touch that. You know, what about your finances, your friends or your family?

You know, God can remove those things in order for you to acknowledge your weakness.

acknowledge your need for him. You know, on, some nights when we pray here at church, Wednesday night, you might hear my daughter Sophia, you know, it's hard to get a two-year-old to be still and quiet for a little while.

And one night we were drawn and, you know, I put my hand over her hand on the pen and I wrote out S-O-P-H-I-A.

[25 : 41] I said, Sophia, that's your name. She smiled, my name. And so I said, let's do it again. S-O-P-H-I-A.

She looks at me, my name. And then she does this, which you've probably heard, she says these two words, me do. Me do. Me do. So then she just scribbles and she looks at me, my name.

It wasn't her name. You know, it's cute when a two-year-old does that, but what about an adult?

God says, hey, you know, I want to have you give your tithe and give to missions.

Me do. Me work hard for me money. Me only give what me want to give. You know, it's funny, but it happens. What about a relationship?

A young guy is like, me, man. Me want to marry woman. Me no care. She no come church. Me get married anyway. Well, guess what happens?

[26 : 42] You're going to get what you get. You know, the Bible tells us if you would just allow God, just like I did with Sophia's hand, let God write that out. You know, I'm not trying to brag here, but when I left Bible college, there was 10 years of me trying to allow God, hey, bring somebody and guess what?

It was dry. Had hardly no prospects and I just said, God, please. And you know what ended up happening? A-M-A-N-D-A, Amanda.

You know, he brought her into my life. I can't say that I always did that because there used to be a time in my life where I was a schemer. You know, my family can tell you, we talk, you know, she that we don't speak of, but there was a girl, Debbie, and I tried to make things work out.

I tried to play the puppet maker. I tried to be that heel grabber. You know what I found out? It doesn't work. It's so much easier to let God control things.

2 Corinthians 12, 9-10 says, And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities than by, or that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

[28 : 02] Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities and reproaches and necessities and persecutions and distresses for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then am I strong.

You know, that sounds backwards, but Jacob was at the right point in his life now. He's being broken down, and we're going to see here in verse 26, another reason that God gives us these wrestling matches is to grow us in prayer.

Look at verse 26. He says, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. You know, we turn back here in our text, and let's look at verse 9.

Chapter 32, verse 9, it says, And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which sets unto me, return unto thy country and turn 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 showed unto thy servant. For with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands.

[29 : 08] 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. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good and make thy seed as the sand of the sea which cannot be numbered for multitude.

You realize that is the first account of Jacob praying in Scripture? And what a prayer. He's like, hey, I'm at the end of my rope, I'm terrified, I'm weak, but you promised, you promised this to me. You know, I think it's, God wants us to be bold and the promises in Scripture that pertain to us, pray them to God. God, you said you would never leave me, you said you would never forsake me. You know, a lot of times it's a matter of our perspective. Grow us in prayer. Hosea chapter 12 verses 3 and 4, it says, this is talking about Jacob now, it says, he took his brother by the heel and 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 Bethel and there he spake with us. You know, I was thinking about that. [30:17] How, how did Jacob prevail? Because he lost. You know, he prevailed because he wanted that blessing.

You know, the one thing his entire life we see in Scripture is he wanted the blessing. He wanted the blessing when it came to Esau. He wants this blessing now. But he was always lacking something. And that was prayer. This is the first time in Scripture he's prayed. You know, he lacked the blessing when there was that wife switch. You know, how often do we just pray at mealtimes and before bed and then we wait before we're in a wrestling match, before we really try to seek God? You know, I'm guilty of it. It happens. You know, sometimes God has to get our attention. You know, just like with my dad wrestling with me. It's because he wanted me to be something. [31:13] He didn't want me to be weak. You know, he wanted me to stand up for something. That's what God wants for us. He has a plan for all of us. How do you know? Because you're still breathing. God has a plan for you.

Number 27 here. Verse 27, it says, this is God. And he said unto him, what is thy name? And he said, Jacob.

Another thing that God wants to do in our trials, wants us to confess our sin. You know, God wasn't looking for information. It's not like God didn't know Jacob's name. He knew that.

God does that. He's not looking for information, but realization. Remember earlier? On in Genesis, he asked Adam, where are you?

Why? Because Adam had sinned. He's covering himself in shame. God didn't know where he was geographically. He knew, but he's saying, Adam, where are you?

[32:14] You know, later on, it says that Cain kills his brother. So God says, Cain, where's your brother? God knew. God is trying to get Cain, Adam, Jacob, us, where are you?

Where are you? You know, confess your sins. He wants us to acknowledge our sin, confess it. You know, Jacob here, when he says, my name is Jacob, he's admitting, I'm a heel grabber.

That's what he's admitting. You know, I'm the guy that bargained for his brother's birthright. I'm the guy that is the deceiver of my father's blessing.

I'm the man that's the schemer for my uncle's flocks. That's me. I'm Jacob, the heel grabber. That's what that is. He's acknowledging who he is, his sin, he's confessing it.

You know, what is our heart's response in trials? You know, do we run to God? Do we run away?

You know, so many times people, they run to the things that give them comfort in this world, whether it be idols or sin.

[33:31] You know, addiction. Addiction is proof that you are capable of strong devotion, but it's to a false God. You know, so many times people are like, oh, I don't believe, you know, I don't have any faith in God.

Well, you have faith in something. And if it's the bottle you turn to, then that's your God. You know, if it's whatever the screen says on the, you know, how the Tao is doing, that's your God.

You know, whatever you're focused on that doesn't put itself beneath God, that's your little g God.

You know, we tend to think so many times our greatest enemy is the Esau, but Jacob's greatest enemy, just like with us, usually is our own hearts.

1 John 1.9 says, if we confess our sins, he is faithful, I'm sorry, if, 1 John 1.8, it says, if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. You know, that's what's taking place here. Not only is this a physical wrestling match, but there's a spiritual wrestling match.

[34:44] Verse 28, we see God say, thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel. For as a prince hast thou power with God and with men and hath prevailed.

So a name change, especially in this culture, is significant because it means either one of two things. First off, ownership or a change in character or a change in destiny.

You know, if he would have kept going as the schemer, he just would have kept going. But then there's a trajectory change. You know, he gets binged over here and now he's going the right way. Sometimes we need in our own lives a little trajectory change, a little nudge, a little wrestling match to get us to what we're doing.

You know, I think it's interesting. I think the best translation that I've found for Israel is God rules. You know, now he's not the schemer anymore.

He's a God-driven man, a God-ruled man. You know, how did Jacob prevail? He found success and was delivered from Esau by prayer and weakness.

[35:51] You'll see later on that Jacob's messengers come to him and they say, hey, we found Esau. He's got 400 guys with him. And then you read further on that Jacob comes to him.

He has all these presents because immediately, you'll see after this chapter 33, immediately, he falls back into being a schemer just like we would do. And he gets to Esau and the Bible says that Esau sees him.

He runs to him. The Bible says he falls on his neck and kisses him. Do you remember an account like that in Scripture? The prodigal son when the father sees and runs to him.

You know, I personally believe that this wrestling match was the determining factor. Is Esau here to kill you and wipe you out with the 400 men?

Or will you submit to me and everything will be good for Esau? I can't tell you that definitively. That's what I believe. This wrestling match was a pouring out of Jacob and a replacement of Israel.

[37:02] Romans 5, verses 3 and 4 say, And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience and patience experience and experience hope.

You know, it's very interesting. You know, you go through this. When you gain that experience, things don't seem as bad. Just a couple weeks ago, I was asking my Sunday school class, I asked them a hard question, and they all agreed it was hard, and I said, Well, why was it hard?

And of course, they just stare at me. I'm like, It was hard because you didn't know the answer. If you know the answer, it's easy. Well, if you go through a trial and you already have experience of that trial, it makes it easier.

You know, the first time we had a kid, it's like, Oh, man, what am I supposed to do? And you have a second one, and you're like, Oh, yeah, I've already done this before. I know. And then I'm sure the more you have, you're just like, Oh, yeah, this is easy.

I could change a diaper with my eyes closed. You know, but you get that experience. That's what God wants to do. Change our character. He wants to give us patience, experience, hope, you know, get our eyes off of the Esau and onto God.

[38:08] Verse 29, you got to really hurry up. 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. You know, to understand God better is another reason God puts us through these trials. You know, God meets us where we are so we can see different perspectives of him.

You know, God met Abraham, who was a pilgrim from Ur, living in Canaan. God met him as a pilgrim. God appeared to Joshua, who was the general of Israel's army.

He met Joshua as a soldier. So now he's meeting the heel grabber as a wrestler. You know, God had told and shown Jacob that he was protected. We read some of those verses earlier. F.B.

Meyer said once that God whispers to us in our pleasures, but shouts at us in our trials. You know, God cannot bless someone who has not surrendered to him. Verse 29, it says, And Jacob asked him and said, Tell me, I pray thee.

[39:06] You know, we just read that. I'm going to skip that. God uses our trials to minister to others. 2 Corinthians 1, verse 3 and 5, it says, Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforted us in all tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. Christ, sometimes God simply puts us in a trial because he knows someone down the line is going to go through that same trial, and you're the person that's supposed to help them get through it. You know, I think about Joseph. You know, we read about his trial. You know, he didn't do anything wrong. He simply decided he was going to stand up for what was right, and he gets lied about, thrown into prison.

You know, Daniel, he just simply did what was right. He gets thrown into prison. But you know what? Through that trial, God had other people in mind. Sometimes it's just simply not about you. And it's hard. It's hard. You know, you're going through the trial and you think, oh, this is personal. Did I do something wrong? It may not even be about you. It's for someone else's benefit. You know, Joseph, he ended up being, spending his time in prison, and guess what?

[40:26] He comes out the number two on the land. He essentially saved the entire known world at that time from starvation, including his family. I think on the other side, we'd be like, I'm willing to go through that again if it can save so many other people, especially my family.

You know, Daniel, he goes through all that, and the king ends up turning to the Lord. James 1.12 says, God has plans for our life.

It's for our good and for his glory. It may be hard to see in the midst, but it will be worth it all. You know, God knows your struggles, and he's dealt with them too. Let's turn to Hebrews 4.15.

Going a little over, but we're so close to being finished. Hebrews 4. Verse 15. For we have not in high priests which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Let us therefore come boldly onto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. You know, God's been through it too. God's had the same struggles.

[41:41] Hebrews 7.25. Wherefore, he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

You know, God will make a way for us to come out of our trial and to him. You know, he wants us to fulfill Isaiah 40.31. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.

They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint. And lastly, in our text, verses 30 and 32, we see two memorials. First off, he says, he sets up this memorial for Peniel, you know, the face of God.

If you read there, it actually says, you know, I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved. Basically, he said, I saw God and I'm living to tell about it. I survived.

You know, that was the first memorial he put. That way other people can see it and see what that stands for. You know, we need mile markers in our own life, spiritually. Look what God did.

[42:44] Secondly, he halted on his thigh. I kind of did a little research. Verse 32 gives us a little information about the hollow of his thigh and the sinew that shrank. Medically, that was probably his sciatic nerve, gone.

The Bible says he halted, which means he cannot walk on that side the rest of his life. You know, the rest of his life, he's walking. He can't move his leg. You know, I guarantee you, he used opportunities to tell his wives, his children, people he met, you know, I was a schemer, I was a deceiver, but God did this and now I'm a walking example of what God has done in my own life. You know, Israel passed down this lesson to his children. We see in verse 32 that that's the reason they didn't eat this. There's some Orthodox Jews that still don't eat this. It's been gone, passed down, passed down, passed down.

You know, he wasn't perfect as the next chapter informs us, but he shared his takeaways from the wrestling match. Our edifying one another can be hard, it can be discouraging, it can be shameful, but they are stories of God's goodness and grace.

James 5.16 tells us, confess your faults one to another and pray for one another that you may be healed. The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Psalm 107.2, the beginning of that verse says, let the redeemed of the Lord say so.

[44:01] You know, Jacob isn't a perfect man, but right after his victory, he falls back to his heel-grabbing ways. As I kind of studied, Galatians 5.17 kind of sums up, I think, Jacob's life.

And if we're not careful, I think it can be our life verse. It says, for the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

You know, we don't have time now because I've gone over. But Romans chapter 7, Paul writes about the same thing. He says, hey, the good things I know I'm supposed to do, don't do them. The bad things I'm not supposed to do, I do do them.

I wish I could figure out how to get under and figure that out. And he tells us at the end, verse 25, that it's because he's not focused on the inward man, but he's focused on God, Jesus Christ, outward.

And that's what we get from these trials, these wrestling matches. So let's bow our head in a word of prayer and then we'll be dismissed. Dear Holy Father, I thank you, Lord, for this day you've given us.

[45 : 09] Lord, I just ask that we would have gleaned something from what you have for us. Lord, I pray that in the midst of our trials, we would just turn to you.

Lord, I just ask God that you would be with the Sunday school hour and just continue to just grow us in you.

I thank you and I love you in Jesus' name. Amen. Great challenge and thought here this morning. I want you to take a moment to bow your heads here for a moment and just contemplate you and your relationship before God.

You know, maybe you're wrestling with some things here today that you need to let go of and let God to do those things that God would have.

As piano plays, what about you today? Maybe you just need to take a moment to surrender those things to the Lord.