

Wrestling

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[0:00] Good morning, everyone. We made the change. I don't know if I like it or not.

! It's like you get used to one and! Before we get started, I want, I need to pray.

So, if you would join me, please. Heavenly Father, we are just grateful for who you are in our lives. And no matter where we find ourselves, we can always look to you.

And we think about the world around us and the chaos and instability. And it helps us to recognize afresh and anew just how much we need you.

Lord, we want to lift up our troops to you that are serving in the Middle East once again. And just ask that you would watch over them and protect them.

[1:23] Lord, we pray for our leadership in the decisions that are being made. And we don't always agree, but we trust you.

We pray for the nation of Israel. Again, not always agreeing, but understanding they have a special place in your heart. And you have a plan and a future for them.

And we lift up the Iranian people, Father God, and just ask for your grace poured out upon them as well. Thank you again that you know all things and that we can trust you in the midst of this.

And Lord, we have people missing from us today. We got youth up at camp. And even as we're having our services this morning, they are as well.

And we just ask that you would work in their midst, move on their hearts, Lord, and speak to them. May lives be touched and changed as they submit themselves to you.

[2:31] And as they return to their home churches, home communities, would you watch over them and keep them safe as they travel? And as was mentioned, Pastor Tom teaching at Calvary Baptist, Lord.

And we just ask for your blessings upon him, the message that you want to speak to that fellowship there, as well as us, and the message you would have for us here.

So again, just acknowledging that fact that you're able and we look to you. And then, Father, we also remember the communities in the southern part of the state that this past week have dealt with devastation and the tornadoes and the loss and the destruction.

And we ask that you would bring comfort to those that have lost much and work in that community again.

That the light of who you are would shine forth through your people as they minister to one another there. So again, just how much we need you in every aspect of life.

[3:46] And we get so focused on ourselves. And the reality is we deal with things. But you are much greater.

And so we're grateful to be able to look to and rest in you in all things. In Jesus' name. Amen. I think, yeah, all that said, and I think, yeah, we go through it.

Right? All of us, any given day, the potential is there. I think of things in the past, things I wish weren't there.

And I'm probably not alone in that. I would imagine a number of you have issues, issues in the past, issues today.

We're going to have more, unfortunately. And we just, we deal with things.

[4:54] I went backwards. There, now I know where I'm going. I entitled this Wrestling.

We've been going through Genesis in our Thursday night studies. And wrestling is in there. I kind of laughed earlier.

We were talking a little bit about it. And it's like I had gone through and I picked out pictures. And I was going to throw some wrestling pictures up there. Right? But who do you do? The old Greco-Roman ones?

Do you do the WWF as it used to be? Now it's E. Do you do the real wrestling? High school collegiate style?

I don't know if any of you wrestled. I tried. It stinks. It's a lot of work. You wouldn't believe how long two or three minutes are.

[5:54] How long 30 seconds is if you're on your back and trying to get off and you can't. Okay? It's my opinion.

It's not fun. Because I wasn't very good. Okay? But the reality is we deal with things. Okay? Again, some things we're not proud of.

Things we just wish never would happen. But the truth is, like I said, we're going to have issues. And I think to myself, you know, when we come to the Lord, everything changes. And the scripture tells us that if anyone is in Christ, he's a new creation.

All things have passed away. Behold, all things become new. And I think, you know, they do in a sense.

[7:02] But in a sense, they don't come, become brand new as quickly as I might like them to. We drag this body of flesh around with us, and it creates a lot of issues.

Thankfully, in Christ, the Lord sees us through that veil of the shed blood of his Son. He sees you. He sees me as pure and holy.

I'm not. I still wrestle with name your poison. A myriad of things, right?

We do. But the Lord would grow us. And, you know, all too often we rest in our own way of thinking. Our self-sufficiency. I got this. Pull yourself up by the bootstraps and let's get going mentality, right?

[8:12] We've all heard that. We've probably all said that. It don't work. When we wrestle with these kinds of things, we may well think of Abraham.

The one that the scripture says he believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. And he was called the friend of God. And I'm thinking, that's what I want to be.

I want to be known as one that is so close that the Lord would refer to me as his friend. But we forget. You go back and you read about Abraham.

He was a mess. Right? Gentlemen, who among you would claim that your wife is his sister so that a threatening king doesn't kill you to take her?

That's Abraham. Twice he throws his wife under the bus to save his own hide. Okay?

[9:27] But this is one of the pillars that we look up to. But he had his issues and his faults. Right? Or King David. Again, God refers to him as a man after his own heart.

David. The adulterer. David. The murderer. David. A terrible father that don't call his own sons to account on their issues.

Again, these are guys we emulate. But again, why I love the scripture because we get, excuse me, real people. Real people.

Guys with warts and flaws, failings, yet pursuing the Lord.

Yet, God has a heart for them and he sees them again in their failings, but through their relationship with him.

[10:38] And then there's the apostle Paul, right? The New Testament example, it's like, oh, it's Paul. It's Paul. Paul. Again, he challenges us in his faith to grow, to be like someone like that, to go to the ends of the earth serving the Lord.

And again, we get that picture of someone totally sold out and living a life of faith. But again, a man with a past, right?

One that hunted believers, imprisoned them. One that condoned the stoning of Stephen and held everybody's cloaks, why they did so.

And he dealt with that. And he lived with that. In Romans 7, Paul says, I have discovered this principle of life.

That when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. Sound familiar? I love God's law with all my heart, but there's another power within me that is at war with my mind.

[12:04] This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. And again, that's you and I.

And I love the reality of Paul sharing this struggle, this wrestling and acknowledgement that, you know, we can have that.

We can have that desire to love, to serve the Lord. And we should have that desire. And we should be doing what we need to, to move and to grow in that progress.

But the reality is, we still have the stinking flesh we carry along with us. So, we're going to look today in Genesis.

And as we do, we're going to look at another guy that struggled. His whole life has been a struggle.

[13:15] He has his past. He has literally been running from his past for 20 years. Struggles with his self-sufficiency.

He has his way of doing things. He's a schemer. He's a manipulator. His name is Jacob.

Jacob's name literally means heel catcher. We connect that to understand it to mean things like the supplanter, a deceiver, a manipulator, a conniver.

And I'm thinking, we know people like that? Do I have that tendency sometimes? We don't want to admit that. But again, the reality is, that's any of us.

And that's what he's been doing his whole life, since birth. To where we find him in the scripture today. He tricked his dad, Isaac, into blessing him when dad intended to bless his twin brother, Esau.

[14:31] And when Esau finds out about this, he vows to kill Jacob. And Jacob's been on the run ever since.

So we're going to go to Genesis chapter 32. And I would say, if you're unfamiliar with the account of Jacob and his life, that begins in chapter 25.

So we've come a ways from his birth in 25 to through the deception and all of that, through his years of running, to where now he's headed home.

Some 20 years later. He's been in exile. He went to school with Uncle Laban and was schooled in the discipline of deception.

He thought he was a good deceiver. Uncle Laban showed him even more. So again, this is very much ingrained in him.

[15:42] He sets out to make his way home to Canaan, still not knowing where things stand with his brother Esau. I think that's a risky move, right?

But the Lord is impressed on him that he needs to go home. He divides up his family and the possessions in order to save himself. Earlier in chapter 32, he finally sits down and prays to the Lord again.

Again, asking for his favor. But upon completing his prayer, he goes right back to doing things his own way. He takes a good portion of his livestock and he divides them up and begins sending out waves of livestock with some of his servants ahead of him.

And the idea is when they come up to Esau, who he hears is coming with 400 men, that he's going to ask, well, what's with all this livestock?

Who are you guys? Where are you coming from? This is from your servant Jacob. So it's gift after gift. He's trying to buy favor with his brother because he don't know, again, where things stand.

[17:07] So, again, this is the background and where we're coming. So he seeks the Lord and it's like he goes, God, I need you. I need your help.

Here's how you should do it. Here's my plan. Right? How many of us? You don't have to raise your hand. That's how we pray.

That's how we think. God, I can't do this. But if you would only do X, Y, and Z, it's going to work out great. But that's where he's at.

That's what's going on. And I think, you know, it reminds me of Jesus' words that are in all three of the synoptic gospels where he says, whoever desires to save his life will lose it.

But whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. We do things to save our own hide. Right?

[18:16] And what's the Lord saying? You give up. You die. I'll take care of it. Now, the context of this, the Lord's statement, is right on the heels of where Peter acknowledges that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah.

Right? So Peter goes from normal Peter to way up here. He gets it. But then what happens?

Then Jesus tells him, I have to go to Jerusalem where I'm going to suffer and be crucified. And he's like, oh, no, no, no, no. You're the coming king.

You're the Messiah. You're the one that's going to deliver us. And what's the Lord tell him? Get behind me, Satan. For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of the men.

I think that's our perspectives. I have a human perspective, not a godly perspective.

[19:30] I see things. How it's going to affect me. Right? Because I'm the most important person to me. The Lord's concerned about the eternal.

His views, his perspectives, as the scripture says, are much higher than mine. And that's what the Lord is addressing with Peter in that.

So Jacob, again, is concerned about how this meeting with Esau is going to affect him. Not so much on what it is that God's trying to do.

And, again, it's, you know, we look at our issues and our problems and our struggles, be it financially, be it relationally, all of those kinds of things.

And it's all, generally, I won't say always because you don't want to say always and never.

Generally, the concern is how do these things affect me?

[20:46] And the Lord wants to work in them and through them for our good, but also for the good of others and that work that he wants to do in us.

So, again, Jesus is saying, if you lose your life, if you surrender, you're going to have it.

You're going to have more. More than your physical well-being. More than your situation being resolved.

There's more than that. And what's he talking about? He's talking about that intimacy of relationship that we can have with him. Eternal life.

Right? Right? Jesus said in John 17, 3, this is eternal life. That they may know you. The only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

[21:50] True life is not my well-being today. True life is a relationship with the Lord. So, again, that's his desire.

That's his perspective of the importance of that relationship with him. Right? Again, not religion. Not going into a building and gathering and sitting and listening to a Bible study.

Not bowing our heads in prayer. Not, name your religious activity. Right? Right? Again, not to say that gathering isn't important.

We get that instruction in the scripture. Not saying that we shouldn't pray. Because we ought to. Because we get that instruction. But it's not the things that we do. It's the relationship with the Lord that matters.

Trusting him. Surrendering to him. Right? And I think, easier said than done. Because, again, I still carry this flesh. Which is battling. Because it likes to be comfortable.

[22:56] Right? I don't like it when it's too hot outside. I don't like cold, rainy days outside. I'd rather be in by the fire. I like to be comfortable.

My flesh. God's not concerned about my comfort. So, again, that difference between the eternal and the temporal perspective.

Because what's he say? What will it profit a man if he gains a whole world that loses his soul? His focus and concern is spiritual and eternal.

Mine all too often is me, myself, and I, and my physical comfort. Right? Who's the most three important people in my life?

Me, myself, and I. We can relate. Right? So, again, God's looking to transform Jacob's life.

[24:00] That's his concern. That's where we find ourselves. Again, as Jacob is leaning on his own understanding, sending out wave after wave of gifts in an attempt to appease his brother.

Because, as far as he knows, 20 years have passed. He could still be hopping mad. Right? So, we pick up at verse 21, Genesis 32.

And it says, so the present went on over before him. And that would be the wave after wave of livestock.

But he lodged himself that night in the camp. And he arose that night and took his two wives, his two female servants, his 11 sons, and crossed over the ford of Jabbok.

He took them, sent them over the brook, and sent over what he had. And Jacob was left alone.

[25:08] Now, a couple things in this. One, you think, okay, alone. What's that mean? Well, he sent the wives and the kids away.

Away. So, there goes a whole bunch of distractions. The servants are gone. There goes my protection. All of the livestock is gone.

There's all my finance. All my stability is gone. Okay?

Okay? When you think about it from that perspective, guess what? You're alone. The things you would look to, trust in, hold on to, lean on, put up as a barrier of protection, you no longer have. You're on your own. But I think you should be able to sleep now. Maybe. Maybe. Again, depends on where your mind goes.

[26:25] But he spends the night alone. But as we're going to see, he's not alone. Because we're never alone. We may feel alone.

We may feel alone with a bunch of people around us. But we're not alone. Even sitting in the dark. Because I doubt he's going to build a fire because he knows his brother's coming and he don't know what that means. So, you don't want to draw attention to yourself. So, he's sitting alone in the dark. Unsure. But I think, what a place to be. And part of that is, okay, I think about, and knowing from the scripture, he's going to have an encounter with the Lord.

And I think, okay, so what am I willing to do to get alone? To be alone. Because the Lord's always with me.

[27:36] So, what am I going to do or be willing to do to get alone? Do I stay up late? Do I get up early? If I wake up in the middle of the night and can't sleep, do I actually get out of bed?

Or do I roll around and grumble and complain because my flesh is not cooperating and I get frustrated? And I know I've got to get up in three hours. Now I've got to get up in two hours. Now I've got to get up in an hour. I might as well get up now. And it's like, well, you should have done that like three hours ago. But what am I willing to do to get alone with the Lord? Am I willing to eliminate the distractions?

Do I shut the TV off? Do I go in a room without my phone? What things in life, not only the physical or the locational, but what's in my life that keeps me from that relationship with the Lord?

Am I willing to even ask that question? I sit down before the Lord and ask him to point that out to me. Right? But again, Jacob finds himself alone.

[28:54] And he has the opportunity or will have the opportunity or we can have that opportunity to give our full attention to the Lord and make him that priority.

Now verse 24 continues and it says, A man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. So this man shows up and wrestles him to the ground.

Now again, if you're sitting alone in the dark and a man comes up behind you, throws you to the ground, what's he thinking? He's probably reaching to feel the arm and see if it's really hairy and he knows it's his brother Esau and he's in big trouble.

Right? But, again, you go from peace and quiet to thrown on the ground, I'm imagining, flat on your face.

And who is this guy? Right? And that's got to be your thought. It's got to be my thought. Who's this man? I kind of already alluded to that. But our scripture is so faithful.

[30:11] The prophet Hosea gives us commentary on this. I don't know if you have heard or not, but I have heard a number of times, the best interpreter of the scripture is the scripture.

Okay? So the more we study, the more we learn, grow, the more we will understand. Hosea gives us this. It says, Even in the womb, Jacob struggled with his brother.

Remember, I told you this has been going on forever. And when he became a man, he even fought with God. Yes, he wrestled with the angel and won.

He wept and pleaded for a blessing from him. So, who's he wrestling with? The Lord. Now, Hosea mentions, and we'll read, that he won.

We think of winning in the physical sense. What's God's perspective? The spiritual or the eternal? And we get some clarification.

[31:18] He wrestled with the angel and won, but he was weeping and pleading. Now, weeping and pleading doesn't sound like winning.

Right? Not from my wrestling perspective. The weeping and pleading was definitely a defeat. So, again, it's that perspective issue.

But from this perspective, again, who is this man? This is what we would refer to as a Christophany. Right? A pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus in the Old Testament. And you think, well, you mean God himself would be wrapped in human flesh and show up to deal with a guy?

To deal with a guy in his sin? We call that the incarnation. Right? Why should we be surprised by this when we see that take place again on the pages of our Bibles in the New Testament?

[32:40] But I think it's important to notice that this man wrestled with him. He did not wrestle with God.

God wrestled with him. Big difference. Right? Jacob's not trying to wrestle something away from the Lord.

The Lord desires to wrestle something awake from Jacob. Right? He wants to strip him of his pride. He wants to strip him of his self-reliance. And his scheming. His fleshly ways. Right?

The Lord came to take those things away from him if necessary, by force. And you think, what was it like to wrestle with God?

[33:47] Perspective is the issue. Creator of the universe who simply spoke and everything leaps into existence.

and a lowly creation. No competition. No competition.

Right? So, we understand that and that's important to understand. Yet, we read that Jacob struggled with him all night long.

Now, now, how do you, how do you get that? How, how is it that the creator of all things wrestles with his creation yet it's all night long?

What's that mean? Not that Jacob held his own. Okay? Hey, no way. that would be like a dad wrestling with his three or four year old son.

[35:01] But if you got a thick headed son like I was, he might fight with dad as long as he possibly can. But what's the issue? It's thick necked me fighting in my stubbornness and my unwillingness to give up.

That's what we're seeing. That's why the wrestling went on all night. Jacob stiff necked, thick headed, stubborn.

He is not giving up. That's why it goes on all night long. So, again, I think, how much can I relate to that?

But what's the Lord looking for? Well, again, scripture tells us Psalm 34 The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart and save such as have a contrite spirit.

And then the one we're probably more familiar with. Sacrifices of God are a broken spirit and a broken and contrite heart.

[36:22] These things, O God, you will not despise. The Lord's looking for surrender, for brokenness.

the question is, so often, what's it going to take to bring me to that place where I quit trusting myself, quit looking to my own ways, and surrender to Him?

That's the question. Well, Genesis continues in verse 25. It says, now when He saw that He did not prevail against Him, this would be God, sees that He's not prevailing against Jacob.

He touched the socket of His hip, and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with Him. So, the Lord lets it go on.

He's like, man, this kid is thick. I have a son. I would say, probably not prophetic, but I like to think of it that way.

[37:45] I remember when I was young, my mom telling me, in my thickness, I hope you grow up and have a son just like you. I did.

Right? Because we're thick. And that's, again, that's it. Again, there is no way in all of creation that Jacob held his own wrestling with the Lord.

No way. But it just, again, shows us the stubbornness of this man, the stubbornness of Jeff on any given day.

Okay? And so then the question becomes, what's it going to take? And the Lord is like, okay. Bink. It's all took.

Bink. What's gone? Jacob's go-to? Scheming, running, conniving, manipulating.

[39:01] He can't run no more. His hip shot. He can't go get a hip replacement. Everything's changed.

Right? He can't run anymore. Hey, look at that. Bring it into the quote-unquote church. How does this, who caused physical pain and suffering to Jacob? Jacob? The Lord did. Well, Jacob brought it on himself, but the Lord did. But how does that line up with, within the church culture family?

Okay? How does that line up with the health and prosperity gospel? right? If you only have enough faith, you should never be sick, you should, your health should be wonderful, it don't line up.

[40:10] Now, I'm not saying, hear me on this, I'm not saying any illness or difficulty or tragedy is by God's cause.

Okay? I'm not saying that. But the reality is, he can and will use the difficulties, the pain, the loss, he can use those things to work in us and to grow us.

Because, again, what's his concern? His concern is the spiritual and the eternal, not the physical.

Now, I'm not saying he's not concerned about our physical, but that's not his priority.

If he can use the difficulties in my life and in your life to affect someone for eternity, oh yeah.

Because guess what?

I have eternity. I have the relationship with him. This person may not. That is more important than my comfort. Okay?

[41:24] And that, I think, is what we're seeing here, is Jacob is coming to that place where he has nowhere to turn and nothing to trust in and look to but the Lord.

That's what's important because that will have an effect on his family, on his community, on the world he interacts with.

Again, that's what is important. So, verse 26 goes on and it says, and he said, let me go for the day breaks.

But he, Jacob, said, I will not let you go unless you bless me. So, he continues to hold on, right?

The Lord's like, come on, it's done, it's over, let go.

And, you kind of see the picture of Jacob with his arms wrapped around the feet of Jesus. And you think, what's he holding on to?

[42:39] Has he got him by the heel? This is Jacob, right? Since, the time he was born, holding on to his brother's heel, he's still clinging.

So, there's a couple things in that, right? He's still Jacob, but now he's clinging to the Lord, and that's a good thing, right? When we come to the place of understanding my struggle against the Lord is pointless, I'm going to lose.

That all of my efforts, all of my wrestling, all of my struggling, it's just going to lead to pain. The best place I can come to is simply hanging on to the Lord, clinging to him.

It's a good place to be, right? He's not dictating terms of surrender.

He's not making demands, and he's seeking the Lord's blessing, as we saw in that passage from Hosea, with weeping, and brokenness.

[44:11] He's come to the end of himself. That's a good place to be. So, he's holding on.

Again, I think, you know, where do we tend to grow the most in our faith? In the times of difficulty? in the places of pain? When all my efforts fail? When I have no place to go but to look to the Lord? Again, the best place to be. But that's where he works in us the most. So, again, he finds himself clinging, which is a good thing.

Verse 27 says, so he said to him, this would be God, what is your name? Do you think God doesn't know who this is?

[45:26] He knows. What's he doing? God's name? He's putting him on the spot. He's asking him to acknowledge who he is.

Jacob's response, he says, Jacob. God says, your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed.

what's your name? Jacob. What's Jacob mean? Heel catcher.

See, yeah, here he is, right? What's your name? You're still clinging to the heel, dude.

What's he saying? Admit it. Admit who you are, you dirty, rotten, stinking thief clinging to my heel. You sinner.

[46:35] Yep. The Lord wants acknowledgement. He wants confession. He wants us to admit to him who already knows who we are.

Who are you? Right? We have to understand who we are in relationship to the Lord. How he sees us. he sees me in my striving and my manipulating and my trying to do things my way and my stubbornness.

He sees all that. He knew all of this about Jacob and guess what? He robed himself in humanity and came to him.

him. He never said you're a waste. You're not worth the effort. You'll never measure up.

[47:55] You got too many addictions. You've lived such a horrible life. None of that. He takes on flesh and comes to us.

He has never left Jacob alone. Never. And he comes. And he'll come to you and I.

He simply wants us to acknowledge our need. And that's what we're seeing here.

And so again as we do the Lord makes a change.

You're no longer Jacob. Right? You're no longer the conniver, the cheat. You're now Israel.

[49:03] now. And he tells, right? You've been the guy that strives, that pushes back against people in your life and against God.

God. Now you're going to be one that serves the Lord. Now you're going to be one that is ruled by the Lord, governed by God.

Here's who you used to be. I once was lost. Here's who you're going to be. Now I'm found. So again, struggled with God and man.

Now surrendered to the Lord and his authority. God. So again, the reality is, does he get all better? No. Those of us that have come to Christ, did we get all better all at once? No. I look so forward, as the scripture says, I look so forward to the day when I see the Lord face to face.

[50:29] Because when that happens, this is gone. And we're robed in the newness that will be the fulfillment of what he has for us.

I look so forward to that. Until then, we're going to wrestle and struggle. But we're learning. What do we do in the wrestling struggle? Submit. Tap out.

Either that or get more pain. Verse 29, wrong way again.

And he said, let me go for the day breaks. But he said, I will not let you go unless you bless me.

Right? So, again, the Lord's I went way backwards.

[51:34] It's like, that don't make sense. How did I do that? There we go. Is that where I am? Yep. Okay.

Jacob asked, saying, tell me your name, I pray. Right? So, he's asking the Lord, what's your name?

The Lord says, why is it that you ask about my name?

And he blessed him. And I was like, you know. you know. And we do, don't we?

When the Lord speaks to us, we know. We might not want to admit it. We might not want to acknowledge it. We know.

When the spirit comes up, he goes, think, think, think, on your chest, we know. When the Lord says, Jeff, you shouldn't be doing that, who is that?

[52:39] Who are you? It's probably just me. Right? Since when do I think that way? Not me. Right?

But again, we come to the end of ourselves and acknowledge the Lord for who he is. That's where the blessing lies.

right? That's where Jacob, now Israel, is finally to that point where the Lord can bless him. And again, that's where the true blessing comes.

Is when we quit, when we give up, when we surrender, and we look to and trust the Lord in all things.

It doesn't mean we stop doing anything. But we quit trusting in what I do, and we trust in the Lord.

[53:44] Verse 30, so Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, where I have seen God face to face. So you think he knew who it was?

Uh-huh. Because he names the place Peniel. He says, and my life is preserved. And just as he crossed over Peniel, the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip.

So he memorializes the place by naming it the face of God. Again, throughout the scripture, the Old Testament, we see places named memorially for things that happen for interactions with the Lord.

And as the sun comes up, he goes and he's limping and he goes back to his family. Now think about that. What was that like? Here comes dad. Dad, what's the matter? Why are you leaning on your staff and dragging your leg behind?

[54:57] And what did his face look like? Number one, was he bloodied and dirty? I don't know. If you wrestle all night with God, I don't think he looked too good.

But I envision a glow on his face and a brightness in his eyes. And you look at it, it's like, dude, you look like you got trashed. He's like, oh, it was awesome.

what? It's like, no, really. God came to me. God spoke to me.

God whooped the snot out of me. I would not give that up for anything. everything's changed.

Everything has changed. That's the blessing. That's the blessing.

[56:11] Right? I ain't running no more. I can't. my hip hurts big time. I would not change a thing.

I have no choice but to trust the Lord. That's the best place I can be. Right?

My grace is sufficient. my strength is made perfect in weakness. Paul, right? That context again.

Paul, dealing with the quote unquote thorn in his flesh.

We all speculate, different commentators speculate on what that was. Doesn't matter. He cried out to the Lord. He begged the Lord over and over and over again. Please take this away from me.

a physical impairment. I'm assuming. But what's the Lord tell him? Dude, my grace is good.

[57:22] You're fine. We don't want to hear that. We want my physical issues to be dealt with. And the Lord's like, I got you.

I got you. What's Paul's response? Most gladly, will I rather boast in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest on me.

It's like, okay, that's what you say, Lord. I'm good. Because dealing with, living in, trusting the Lord through the physical difficulties, the emotional upheaval, the pain and the suffering, shows the power of Christ in me.

Why? So it can affect the lives of other people. That's what matters. The Lord is concerned about the hearts, the lives, the eternity of other people.

Not my comfort. Again, sometimes the greatest blessings come out of tragedy.

[58:53] And I'm going to reiterate it again. It does not mean the Lord causes the tragedy. He might.

Again, I think depending on how thick I may be, I refer to it as two-by-four therapy.

Okay? Sometimes you need a good whack to the back of the head with a two-by-four to get your attention. And if that's what it takes, the Lord may well do that.

Why? Because he's concerned about the hearts, the lives, the souls of other people. And he sees his kids run around acting stupid. They need to get disciplined.

And again, the scripture shows us that. But sometimes he allows things to come so that he can show himself strong on our behalf in the midst of those difficulties.

[60:02] So again, just, you know, that the power of Christ can be made evident and influence the lives of others.

Moses' commentary of this. Moses is the author of Genesis. It says, Therefore, to this day, the children of Israel do not eat the muscle that shrank, which is on the hip socket, because he touched the socket of Jacob's hip in the muscle that shrank.

So, from the time this is transpiring in the life of Jacob, until the time Moses records it, as a memorial, not a command of God, but as a memorial, the children of Israel did not eat this particular piece of meat on that part of the body as a memorial.

And you wonder, how did all this stuff get passed on? Things like this. You learn it from your parents, and you pass it on to your children who pass it on to their children, that and the fact that they were living like hundreds and hundreds of years old.

My understanding at this point in time, Jacob's like 97. He's not done having kids. If you go home and you pick up your Bible and you keep reading, you're going to find out he gets back home and dad who they expected to die 20 years ago, still kicking it.

[62:06] Right? Time's not the issue where the Lord's concerned. But again, they memorialize this. but they memorialize he's no longer Jacob, the schemer.

He is now Israel, one that is ruled by, governed by, directed by the Lord. God's And I think, you know, again, this is one night.

You could read through and not have this and keep going. You think, would it make that much difference?

In the grand scheme of things, God changes his name. Okay, cool. But it's here, and the scripture tells us, I've written these things in the past so that you may learn from them.

That's why we have passages like this. There's so much here for us to learn from, to apply to our lives today.

[63:21] And I think, again, I think, you know, why he desires to bring this to us. Right? He's not looking for broken spirit, broken and contrite heart.

He's looking for our surrender. Is he looking for our education? Is he looking for our great oratory skills?

skills? He can use education. He can use skills. But he's looking for hearts that are devoted to him. He can make up for all the rest, right? Scripture tells us what? He's chosen the foolish things to save the wise or to put to shame the wise, the weak things, to put to shame the things which are mighty.

Man's perspective, we have our credentials, our experiences, our abilities. I go back to Paul.

[64:42] Paul was a lawyer, part of the Sanhedrin, the ruling council of all of Israel. Highly, highly, highly educated.

Can God use that? Oh, certainly. So again, don't get me wrong on what I'm saying, but those aren't the qualifications he's looking for.

He is looking for our hearts and our submission. our obedience. That's what he's looking for.

He tells us, the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are loyal to him.

that's what he wants. Right? And he's willing to use whatever is necessary to bring us to that point.

[65:54] Right? And again, we're going to wrestle. We're going to struggle. again, if you go back and look earlier in chapter 32, Jacob is praying, Lord, deliver me from my enemy.

Esau's coming and he's going to kill me. But guess what? The Lord answered his prayer. Deliver me from my enemy. so often I am my worst enemy.

Again, is it that willingness of us to come before the Lord and honestly and openly ask the question?

That's where he brings us. Right? We wrap with Paul the end of that scripture out of Romans 7 which is just so much.

What's his answer? I thank God. The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. That's the answer.

[67:22] Doesn't matter what the question is. Again, this is on the heels of Paul wrestling. I want to do what's right and I keep doing this stuff that I'm not supposed to do and the frustration and the reality of the struggle.

The answer is the Lord. Okay? So, again, that's his heart for us.

Quit wrestling. Tap out. Surrender.

Right? Whether that's coming to the Lord the first time, initially, whether it's my thick-headedness and hard-heartedness and fleshly ways that I carry around with me.

Again, I'm thankful that the Lord tells us that having begun the good work in us, again, that comes first. acknowledging my need and submitting to him so that he can begin the work.

[68:48] We don't do this stuff in order to come to him. We come to him in order that he can do this. Right? But having begun, he is faithful and will complete the work that he starts in us.

When? In the day of Christ Jesus, when I stand before him face to face and no longer deal with this stinking rotten flesh, until then, I'm going to deal with it.

Why the scripture tells us to mortify, to put to death the deeds of the flesh. Over and over and over and over, I've got to come to the Lord and die to myself over and over and over again.

Sometimes I just don't want to. but I have to acknowledge the Lord thinking me in the chest saying, dude, come on.

You don't want what might be coming. If you keep being stupid and doing the things that you're doing, because guess what? There's consequences. Sometimes I bring them on myself. sometimes the Lord may allow it, but he wants to work these things in our hearts, in our lives, so that we can know the blessing of the fullness of a relationship with him.

[70:19] Let's pray. Father, thank you so much for your faithfulness to us, and to know that you would give up the glory of heaven to be robed in humanity to come and speak with us personally, pay the price for our individual sin, that we could have the blessing of knowing you, that you would pay the ultimate sacrifice, one that doesn't make sense to us, out of love, for the likeness of me.

Father, help us to be those that are attentive to that still small voice when you prod us, when your word speaks clearly to us, that we would be obedient to what you say, that we would submit afresh and anew, confess, acknowledge what you say about whatever the particular issues are, and that we would just simply cling to you, trust you in whatever it is that life has for us, whatever it is that you have for us in this life.

And so again, I just ask, Lord, that you would have your way, trust that your word will accomplish that which you have said it to. in Jesus' name, amen.

Well, thank you, and have a wonderful week. Enjoy sunshine.