

The Crippling That Crowns

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Date: 14 July 2013

[0 : 00] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word. Genesis 32, if you would. Here's the story. I titled this, I forget which famous old preacher said it, but this is the crippling that crowns.

The crippling that crowns. And this is the story of Jacob, as you know. I'm sure you know the story already. Let me just kind of tell you the story.

We'll walk through Genesis 32. It says in Genesis 32, 1, though, I think you need to get this. This is something I don't think you pay attention to. You know, this is a story where he will soon, he is on his way to meet his brother Esau.

He is afraid. His brother Esau has 400 soldiers coming with him. In just a little bit, he will be alone by himself and laying down to go to sleep, and a man's going to grab him and have a wrestling match with him that will last all night long.

But in chapter 32, verse 1, it says, And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. Underline that. The angels of God met him.

[1 : 07] And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host, God's army. And he called the name of that place Mahanim. How do you say that? Which means two camps, double camp.

He had his camp, and God had his camp. The camp of the Lord. The Lord was camped around about him. And so Jacob's been gone 20 years, and his mama said, When everything gets okay with your brother, I'll send word, and you can come home.

It's been 20 years. He still hasn't heard anything. So he sends messengers in verse 3, and he says, Make sure Esau knows Jacob, his servant, is on his way.

And this is what I've been doing, and I sure hope we're on good terms now. Verse 5, I find grace in your sight. And the messengers came back, and they said, We got to your brother Esau, and by the way, he's on his way to meet you.

And he's got 400 men with him. In verse 7, Jacob is greatly afraid and distressed. And so he starts dividing up his stuff, and he puts out what he likes the least out in front, and kind of divides it up in bands, so that he'll be the last one.

[2 : 15] Let everybody die, but get me last. Kill my friends, and kill my family, and take my stuff, but leave me alive. In verse 9, Jacob said, O God of my father, He gets praying now.

O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord would set unto me, Return unto thy country. Verse 10, I'm not worthy. Verse 11, Deliver me.

Verse 12, I'll remind you, you said you'd take good care of me. And he sends all those animals. You can see that starting in verse 14. Two hundred she-goats, twenty he-goats, two hundred ewes, twenty rams, thirty milk camels, and their colts, forty cows, and ten bulls, and twenty she-asses, and ten foals.

And he sends all that on his way to see his brother. And he put a space between it, so maybe his brother would get the first gift, and say, Oh, that's really nice of my brother. Feeling pretty good. By the time he got through saying, Thank you for that one.

Here come a whole other gift, and another gift. And there was a space between, drove and drove. In verse 20 it says, And I will appease him. I will appease him with the present.

[3 : 19] I'll make peace with the present. And in verse 20 it says, And maybe peradventure, he will accept me. Verse 24 is where we're headed tonight. Jacob was left alone.

Jacob was left alone. And there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh. The hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint as he wrestled.

Before the night's over, he says, You'll no longer be called Jacob. You'll be called Israel. And then he said, Jacob says, He names the place Peniel, and he says, I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

In verse 31, He will limp for the rest of his life. I want you to know before we pray, that God's at work in your life. And it's been years.

It's about 97 years old now. And God's allowed him to play his games and do his thing. He was a deceiver at home. He was taking advantage of his brother. He has run for 20 years.

[4 : 22] Things have been going wrong in his life. He's had his wages changed 20 times. Now he knows that even Laban doesn't like him. He's a man without a country. His brother will kill him if he goes home.

Laban and his sons are mad at him. He knows he needs to get out of there. And the only one he's got left is God. There's some exciting things going on in the story. But what you need to know is this.

God's building a man. God's building a man that he can use. And God is at work in your life building you. God is at work in your life building you. I'd like to remind you, if I could, please, Jacob's not a preacher.

Jacob's not a missionary. Jacob's not a pastor of a church. Jacob's not in full-time work. Jacob is a businessman. Jacob has a farm. Jacob has cattle.

Jacob has work that he does outside of that. But God is using him. One of the most important ministers he could possibly have, he will have 12 sons that will become the 12 tribes of Israel.

[5 : 22] And you need to know that God is at work in your life. You are not off the hook. You should never, ever think, never, ever accept, never, ever believe that God has a special class of men that he says these are preachers, these are pastors, and these are missionaries, and these are the great guys.

They're the ones I really want to work with. And the rest of us are just here. We're like spectators. They're the great guys. They're the ones that play on the ball team, and they're the ones on the field. No, you're all in the ministry.

You're all his. You all belong to him. You all have a responsibility. Every woman, every man, every child, and God is at work in bringing us to where he can use us. So as we go through the story tonight, and we look at what happened in his life, I hope you'll wake up and say, how am I allowing God to work in my life to make me who I'm supposed to be, to make me the man or the woman that ought to be, to make me the parent that ought to be, to make me the husband that ought to be, to make me the worker in his kingdom that ought to be.

Father, I pray that you'd deal with our hearts tonight, and I pray you'd challenge and motivate your people. I love them, and I love you, and I know you love them far more than I could ever love them, and I know that you are working in their lives, and you're working in my life, and I just pray, God, that you'd grow us, that you'd take us to the crippling that crowns us, that you'd take us to the breaking that makes us, and I will give you great honor and great glory and great praise for all that you do.

In Jesus' precious name, amen. Well, Jacob's on his way home, and he has got a brother waiting on him. Proverbs 18, 19, the Bible says, With a brother offended, it's harder to be won than a strong city, and their contentions are like bars of a castle.

[7 : 03] See, the old boy's on his way home, but he knows something, man. My brother is mad at me, and I am scared. I deceived him. I left on bad terms. And so as you read the story, just know he's in trouble.

The man's in trouble. And so when you're in trouble in your life, and when things aren't going correct like they ought to, you need to know that God's at work, even in those troubling times. There's a lesson here about believing and acting on what we know.

Jacob's a man of God. He's going to pray. You're going to learn something about prayer in this. But the big story is this. Jacob needs to come to the end of Jacob.

Jacob needs to run out of himself and run out of his will. He needs to get to the point where God can work in his life. Number one, first thing, Jacob meets the angels, God's army.

Chapter 32, verse 1, Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. When Jacob saw him, he said, This is God's army. This is God's host. And he called the name of that place.

[8 : 03] Jacob meets the angels, and he realizes God's army is there with him. He even names it a word that means a double camp. That word in the Hebrew means double campers, two camps. We've got the camp of Jacob, and we've got the camp of God.

He knows he's not alone. He knows he's God's man. He knows God's told him to go home. He knows God's on his side. And when God's for you, you really ought to have anything to fear.

The Bible said in Romans 8, 31, What shall we say then? What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? It must have thrilled Jacob.

He's alone. He's scared. And on his way back home, and God shows up, and God says, I'm here. But Jacob still can't quit struggling, and fighting, and wrestling, and trying to win with his own abilities.

In verse 5, it says, And I have oxen, and asses, and flocks, and medservants, and maidservants, and I have sent to tell my Lord that I might find grace. He writes, says, Hey, brother, I'm coming home, but I've got a lot of junk.

[9 : 11] I've got a lot of animals. I've got everything. And underline this, that I. I'm sending you a gift because God may be with me, and God may have sent me home, and God may have said He's going to take care of me, but I'm a little nervous about that, and I'm sending you gifts.

He sent His messengers. He wants to heal the wound, but Esau's coming in verse 6 with 400 soldiers. 400 soldiers. Did you ever see God's hand in your life and know His promises, and yet refuse to believe and act on them?

You know, when I get scared, I am just like Jacob. I mean, I'll be honest with you, I can't look down on Jacob one bit. Number one, I am a schemer and a conniver. I'm always trying to figure it out. If I have a problem or something's thrown in my lap, I'm immediately, I'm going to get out a yellow pad and a pencil and an ink pen, and I'm going to start drawing up a plan.

I'm going to start figuring out what I'm going to do there. There's old Jacob. God comes in and says, I'm sending you back. I'll be with you. I'll do this stuff in you. He sends an army and shows him an army, and Jacob's like, I appreciate your help, God.

Now let me figure out what I'm going to do here. Sometimes, we kind of fall into that trap. But in his fear, Jacob teaches us some great lessons about praying. Look if you would at verse, that's the second thing.

[10 : 21] I want you to look at his prayer. Look at verse 7. He was greatly afraid. He was distressed. And he divided the people and the herds and he made it into two bands. He's terrified.

A guilty conscience often makes us see the darkest possible picture. Even before he prays, he schemes some more. When faith is crowded out by fear, we're prone to start scheming and trusting our own resources.

And he says, I want to send my family, and if Esau come to one company and smite it, then another shall escape and be alone. I'm trying to figure out. He knew how to pray. He knew God was with him.

He knew who he was praying to, but he's praying in desperation. He's scared. He's not trusting. He's praying, believing, praying not believing what God has already shown him.

But let me show you some great prayer lessons right here about how we pray. This is very similar to your model prayer or the Lord's prayer in the New Testament. Look if you would in verse 9.

[11 : 22] In verse 9, he prays to our Father. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. This is how he prays. Look how he starts off the prayer in verse 9. And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, the Lord which said unto me, return to thy country and thy kindred.

He prays to God, the God of his grandfather, the God of his dad. He knows that he is the Lord. He says, God of my father, the Lord which said to me, Jehovah God, which said to me.

He reminds God that he, Jacob, is doing what he was told to do. He reminds God that God said he would deal well with him. The prayer starts like the model prayer. However, instead of going on to say, Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, he says, God, I need help.

Can I just stop you and say, look at this way just a second. Big problem I have when I pray. I often pray to get what I want and I don't pray for his will. But when Jesus taught his apostles to pray and he taught people to pray, he said, Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done. God, I come to you and I want you to do in me what you want to do in me. I want you to work in my life. I want you to have your will accomplished in my life.

[12 : 39] That's how they were taught to pray. Brother Jeff, when I got cancer, Brother Jeff told me, he said, I called TBN to get them to pray for you. He said, because them Baptists would always pray stuff like it would be your will, God.

He says, I called TBN because they don't have to worry about that. They just tell God straight up, this is what we want you to do. And so he called God and told God, he told them to tell God to take care of me and I appreciate that, Brother Jeff. That's kind of how old Jacob prayed here.

Jacob prays, he says, God, you know who you are and you know what you've told me to do and I'm asking you to meet my need. Praying really needs to be a time I get alone with God and I start realizing who God is.

He knows in a great way that he knows he's not worthy. We're fixing to see that but he's not ready when he prays. He's not ready to say, God, you're in charge. God, do whatever you want with me.

God, you work this out. God, you show yourself. He's not like Jesus saying, hey, Lord, if there's any way this cup could pass, that'd be great but not my will but yours. That's not his prayer here tonight.

[13 : 39] Look at verse 10 though. He does know he's not worthy. I am not worthy of the least of all mercies. The littlest thing you've ever done for me, I wasn't even worthy of that. That probably goes against our grain but can I remind you that whenever you pray to God you need to know that.

We are not worthy of the least of the little things he's done for us and of all the truth which I showed your servant and how you've done all these things, how you've worked in my life, I'm not worthy. Prayer is admitting and recognizing he's powerful and I'm weak, he's able and I'm not and I can come to him.

We never go before the Lord in a position of strength. We do not command. We plead. We know it's only grace but he still boldly asks and you can ask.

Our God told us we could ask. We ought to go saying our Father which art in heaven hallowed be thy name thy kingdom come thy will be done and by the way God I do have some things I want to ask you for and he does that if you would in verse 11 he says deliver me I pray thee God deliver me take care of my wife take care of my kids nothing wrong with being but asking with asking.

Verse 12 he gives you another lesson he prays based on God's word he prays based on God's word look what he says in verse 12 and you should mark that that's a great Bible lesson on prayer he said and thou sayest you said you said it to me now he didn't have the written word you and I got the written word but he said you said God that you would surely be with me and do me good make my seed as the sand of the sea which cannot be numbered you said it God so I'm coming to you and saying you promised it and I'm asking you to work in my life great lessons about praying number one lesson know you're talking to the father know you're talking to the one that's way above and beyond you our father which art in heaven pray when you pray knowing this you're praying for his will to be done pray knowing that you can pray asking for things God wants you to ask you show his greatness when you know everything happens because of what you do in my life pray based on what the word of God says pray asking him pray knowing you are not worthy to ask but God is great enough and gracious enough to give verse 20 if you would he falls into the trap of prayers not enough

[15 : 56] I don't know if this ever happens with you but basically the last thing we do is pray we're in trouble we've tried all the doctors we've talked to everybody we've got all the x-rays we've done everything that we can do and when everything's finished and you're out of money and you run out of doctors we pray and that's often the way I've been and I'm afraid the way some of you might be and I want you to notice in verse 20 we're working our way down through he's prayed beautifully he's done a great job in verse 20 he said now I'm through praying I need to figure out what I'm going to do so look if you would in verse 20 I will appease him with the present and he even says and maybe peradventure he will accept Jacob prays but he doesn't really believe God he was told by God that he would be cared for he's seen the angels of God there with him he's already sent gifts ahead hoping to appease Esau he says maybe just maybe Esau will accept my gifts and not be mad at me he's not saying God's going to take care of him remember faith is living without scheming faith is living without scheming how often have I prayed and used everything at my power and connived and schemed to get things done that's where we fall into trouble the real problem there isn't Esau the real problem isn't that he's got a brother coming at him with 400 men the real problem is Jacob still a man doing it in his own power with his own abilities and I am so guilty of that and I'm afraid you are one of the problems of being strong smart intelligent wealthy people that we are we often do things in our own ability and we don't trust

God this is the story of how God gets Jacob to the point that Jacob knows it's all God and not me he has now lived almost a hundred years and he has always been able to get himself out of the trouble he's always been able to work hard enough plow fast enough do whatever it takes and he's always been able to get it taken care of now he's divided everybody up he's got all of his family on the other side of the river he's all by himself look at verse 24 he is now alone he is alone and Jacob was left alone Jacob was alone you know that feeling alone nobody's talking to you nobody's holding your hand nobody has an answer you've called all your friends you've called in every thing you can do I lived in a country where for years if you're in trouble in a place like Peru it's all about who you know call the right people well you've called everybody and now you're alone and you don't know what's going to happen you're alone and you don't know what's going to happen and all of a sudden alone and scared in the dark a man grabs

Jacob and begins to wrestle with him notice in the story in verse 24 that Jacob didn't wrestle with him the man wrestled with Jacob Jacob didn't start the fight the man started the fight this isn't Jacob trying to get a hold of God and get something out of him this isn't Jacob praying it's God working in Jacob's life to break him Jacob will become he will be made into the man of God that God wants him to be could I help you understand something I truly believe what I'm about to say I believe that you are very important in our Lord's economy he is at work in your life he has taken you to a place that you can truly be used you are not just a spectator you are not just a listener you are a child of God and he is at work in your life and he is taking you to where you will be used of God and there old Jacob is nearly 100 years old always doing things in his own power always doing things the way he wants to do them and the man shows up and begins to wrestle with him the point of this fight is Jacob finally is running out of himself

Jacob is finally running out of himself Jacob will get to the point that he knows he can't he will lose again but this time losing will be winning this time losing will be winning you might not have written this down at any time but everything with our God is the opposite of what the world says if you want to know Bible ways of doing things to be whole you must be broken to go up you must go down to get you must give to live you must die to find your life you must lose your life everything about our God is the opposite it's not positive thinking it's not how good I can do it's not what I can do it is the Lord working A.W.

Tozer said the Lord cannot fully bless a man until he has first conquered him and Jacob refuses to break verse 25 when he saw that he revealed not against him Jacob wouldn't give up now can I just remind you of something the angel can whip him anytime he wants to that's Jesus fighting with him he can whip him anytime he wants I mean whenever he gets ready he just goes bam touches him and old Jacob goes wow that was below the belt that hurt that knocked my leg out of joint he could have broken him at any time but old Jacob won't give up Jacob and I we're first cousins I believe we're brothers I believe he might have been me not literally I'm just saying to you Jacob won't give up he refuses to give up Jacob holds on to who he is Jacob wants to hold on to his dignity Jacob is not willing to face who he is and see himself like he really is you know I can look in a mirror and you could know about me what

[22 : 02] I don't know about me because I won't see myself as who I am I will see myself in the best light I will see you in the worst light I will understand me and my good intentions but I won't understand you that way and Jacob is not going to do right so the man touches the man Jesus touches him he knocks his thigh out of joint this is Jesus it's a Christophany Jesus is there he will end the story is saying I wrestled with God and I lived Jacob doesn't want to leave the fight verse 26 he said let me go for the day breaks and he said I will not let thee go except you bless me the truth is that Jacob is not winning the fight Jesus could have easily walked away at any time he wanted to in the fight Jacob does not have the upper hand God is at work in his hand and God is about to show him who he is and so he says okay well what's your name what's your name and you know their names were like a description it was who they were and

Jacob from the time he was named a supplanter a heel grabber a trickster a deceiver a liar but you know Jacob doesn't see it that way Jacob may be a deceiver and a liar and a trickster but Jacob sees it as a shrewd businessman who knows how to work out the best deals who knows how to take care of number one Jacob doesn't see who he is by the way Jacob is that means deceiver and trickster Jacob is the guy who lies and says he's Esau Jacob is the old man Jacob will get but he had to see himself and I don't know if you realize what's going on in your life but God wants you to see him and most of us are so we're preening in the mirror to clean ourselves we're fixing our feathers and getting them all in line we're combing our hair we're brushing our teeth we're getting our wrinkles covered up we're getting our makeup on

I'm going to put the best face forward I can but God won't work until Jacob you see yourself and you realize who you are and you realize that you failed he won't stop in verse 28 he said thy name shall be called no more Jacob but Israel for as a prince has thou power with God and with men and has prevailed Jacob you're going to be called Israel this is the for I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved but he halted upon his thigh finish this in just a second but watch this

Jacob walked into there scared but proud scared but knowing he could work it out honestly you can't throw anything Jacob's way that for a hundred years he hasn't been able to handle but God needs to get him to a place that he will become a God mastered man that he won't be Jacob mastered that he won't be self mastered that he won't be doing things in his own power and his own ability he needs to get him to a place where he will give up on himself and believe in what God can do and when he leaves I hope you underline it in the verse it says in verse 31 he halted upon his thigh and so from that day forward every time he takes a step he has a limp and every time he takes a step but instead of that being a weakness it's a real strength it's what happened to the apostle Paul if you recall he had been allowed to see great things he had been taken up into heaven and he seen things that other men ought not see and God gives him a thorn in the flesh and he said God would you please take away the thorn would you please quit hurting me and

God said no I don't want you to be exalted above measure I don't want you to think too highly of yourself and so Paul said well thank you Jesus I will praise you in my weakness and I will rejoice and be glad when things are going wrong in my life because I know who you are he'll limp the rest of his life remember this wrestling match was not about getting something from God so many times people have preached it and they act like it's Jacob is going to get God twist his arm and make God do something for him the chapter started off with God saying you go and I'll take care of you you go and here's my army to go with you God already said that but somehow Jacob ignores what God's going to do in his life like you do honestly God's going to bless your giving honestly God's going to bless your prayer time honestly God's going to bless you raising your children God is more concerned about doing something great in your life than you would ever be but the difference is defending himself and refusing to yield to

[27 : 37] God we will not see ourselves until we have seen the Lord like Isaiah we will say woe is me I'm a man of unclean lips Jacob will walk with a limp the rest of his life but rather than being weaker he will be stronger than he's ever been before by the way he's going back slide again so here's the lesson give up more than your goats you know Jacob set things ahead in order of priority if I have to lose anything let it start with this and save me for last if he's going to take something I take my goats now you listen to this and I close God wants to use you testimony of my wickedness I was saved just before I turned eight years old I was seven the preacher preached on Calvary that's about all I remember and I accepted

Christ on May the 6 1962 I was baptized the very next week I was a very unusual young man to be honest with you I never missed church my family never missed church I was always in church by the time I was 11 years old everybody knew they used to call me the little preacher boy when I I couldn't carry a tune in a bucket but I would sing and yell by the time I was 11 I surrendered to be a missionary I never had sex outside of marriage and I never drank the alcohol I never did all the things everybody else did I was a very special kid when everybody else wanted to be fireman and policeman and join the Marine Corps or whatever else they wanted to everything in my life man I'm just telling you it was always flying

Betty and I took the first church and it had two young people the first night and within a year we were running over a hundred young people God just did great things and the more God did big stuff the more I thought I'm good just be honest let's look around I'm pretty stinking good and you know what is okay Austin I've let you see some good stuff and I've been good to you but you need to know it was me that did it and not you and so breakings come things happen in your family things happen that are beyond your power you wonder I can still remember the night we found out that Chris had diabetes we walked in there and I had been through so many breakings you're going to go through breakings all your life God is constantly going to be saying stop it stop being so much about you and religious people and Christians and pastors can be like that we were sitting outside the doctors Chris was 14 years old this is a long time ago we were sitting outside a doctor office and we knew something was wrong he couldn't see three feet in front of his face he got extremely skinny he couldn't hardly walk

I told him to go out and run he couldn't run and we go to the doctor's office and we were sitting outside the doctor's office and I knew he had diabetes there were ants all around any bathroom he ever used we knew and I said to him what are you doing what are you doing don't you know who I am don't you know I am a missionary and I live in this God forsaken place called Arequipa don't you know you know what I think God wanted to scream at me was don't you know who I am and the story is not about you I think the Jacob story is more true about you than you would like to think you make money you got an education you have this and you that I am so guilty of it let me just tell you this he is always having to do it to me because every time I get broken I say man I really know who you are Lord and I am excited about it but I don't ever get this I walk with the rest of my life and get it straight it seems like every time he gives me one good punch it says wake up boy it is about me

I take that for about a month or six months and I get back up here's what God wants to do he wants to break you not hurt you not hurt you not hurt you he wants to crown you but the way he does it is help you know it's not about you it's not about you even this church was a because if you had known what my ministry had been in Peru I knew that 300 400 minimum were going to show up the first Sunday and glory to God I think we might have broke a hundred with everybody we can invite bringing our families in and everybody else and I think God was up in heaven saying Austin buddy I don't care how many friends you got I don't care how much money y'all can raise I am still God here is a big lesson he cripples so he can crown because no blessings come when

[32 : 55] I am in my own strength no real blessings come no real power happens when I am in my own strength and I am constantly needed to be reminded he is God and I am not worthy he lives I must die he up and I down my life is about giving and not taking he who seeks his own life will lose it we have life in Christ I am a new creature I have all the blessings of God but let me remind you he wants Austin to know that Jesus is big and Austin is little have you been resisting are you still wrestling all night is he saying to you right now what's your name buddy and you have to say Austin peacock proud arrogant think you're somebody oh excuse me is he at work in your life father in heaven I love you and I praise you and I thank you for what you're doing and

I pray that your name would be honored and glorified I pray you draw your people to you Lord I know that we're nothing vision Baptist is nothing I'm certainly just pray that you bring honor to your name and work in our lives and God help me to know that it's you and to keep remembering that and to quit getting so caught up in me and I'll give you praise for all that you do this message was recorded at vision Baptist church in Alfred Georgia for more information log on to www.vision Baptist dot com where you can find our service