

11. Contending with God

Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the **socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. And He said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks." But he said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!" So He said to him, "What is your name?" He said, "Jacob." And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed"** (Genesis 32:24-28).

You may have picked up by now how much this word means to me.

Three Responses. We want to bring back a line from Abraham's story, in Genesis 22, that we did not develop yet. – Because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your **only son... blessing I will bless you.**

We match this, then, with the same response to Jesus. – "Because You have done this thing" – Therefore, also, God highly exalted Him and favored Him with the name above every name, that inside of the name of Jesus, every knee should bow (Philippians 2:9-10).

I am convinced, then, that this line is our part in the same equation – I will not let You go until You bless me.

How Does God Get His Way? God will get His way. BUT – a key defining question regarding the entrance of the Kingdom through us is – HOW? How, exactly, does God get His way?

Two images – the first by violence, by forcing everyone to do what He says, and the second by love and symmophy, that is by laying down His life for our sakes, and then sharing our lives with us.

The “god” who uses violence is arrogant. The God who lays down His life for us enters His creation with these words – He humbled Himself.

Jacob the Conniver. This is the context, then, in which I want to place this strange experience Jacob had one long night and what that experience means to our lives right now.

Jacob was a conniver; his name meant, “one who seizes the place belonging to another,” that is, “supplanter.” Jacob won by trickery the place belonging to his older brother, Esau.

Paul explains carefully in Romans 9 that when God said, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated,” this was not according to outward performance, but by God’s choice. Yet both men acted out from the inner desire of their hearts.

Those Whom God Has Chosen. In fact, if you read Romans 9:6-13 carefully, you see that Paul is placing us as Jacob. Even though outwardly the inheritance belongs to natural Israel, yet we seize it for ourselves, while many of natural Israel are not interested, as Esau was not interested.

Even though Jacob acted out of his nature of always thinking how he could benefit by manipulating others, there was something God had planted in his heart that made the difference. Jacob wanted to know God; he wanted “God-with-me.”

This quality marks those whom God has chosen.

Jacob Grabs a Guy in the Dark! Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. – **Jacob said, “I will not let You go.”**

Think of the profound implications of these lines. Jacob has spent the whole day in his worst “conniving” mode, afraid that Esau will kill him and doing his best to make that not happen. That means that he sends everyone on ahead, for Esau to meet first, hoping to save his own skin.

Then Jacob is by himself and there, in the dark, a man comes. Jacob grabs hold of the guy and starts wrestling him, trying to pin him down. – What is going on?

God in the Flesh. It is evident that Jacob is convinced that this “man,” whom he cannot see because it’s dark, is God in the flesh, the angel of the Lord, the God who spoke to Abraham.

Is that how most people would respond? Is that how you would respond? If you are in a dark night in your back yard and a man bumps up against you and you know in your heart that this is God in the flesh, would your response be to grab hold of God, trying to wrestle Him down, refusing to let go all through the long hours of the night?

I can assure you of this, that has been my only response.

Hearing or Refusing. As I work with the JSV, I use the life of the ruling verses of the Bible to guide my choice of which English words to choose in the short list provided by James Strong. And thus I see, in these simple layouts of English possibilities, that the words obedience and disobedience, mean “submission to hearing,” and “refusal to hear.”

Because the translators were ignorant of the simple fact that they existed every moment by the good speaking of Jesus, they chose “obey” and “disobey,” as outward actions, that is, the tree of the knowledge of right and wrong.

But receiving the entrance of Jesus as Word is God’s only true obedience.

Sons of Refusal. And so, in Ephesians 2, instead of “sons of disobedience,” the JSV has “sons of refusal.”

“Disobedience” speaks of outward human actions guided by the mind and is not really speaking of human nature. “Refusal” speaks of an inward quality of the heart and explains all human action.

Every false example in the Old Testament believed in God, approached God, and sought to “please” God. – Cain, Ishmael, Esau, Korah, Saul, Absalom, Uzziah, and so on. Yet not one of those who “refused to hear,” would have done what Jacob did had they met up with God themselves.

Refusal Makes Us Human. As that word, “refusal,” entered my thinking, however, I realized that it is, in fact, the central God-designed trait of our hearts, the very thing that makes us human. You and I as humans have the God-given right to refuse God, and we have the God-given right, as the defining nature of our human hearts, to refuse to let go of God.

On a detective show, the murderer, after she was caught, said, “But I had no choice.” The detective said, “You always have a choice.”

The choice is always the same. We cannot always choose to do, but we can always choose to refuse.

I Refuse. All my life I have refused. When I was dared as a child, I simply refused. When I was manipulated by bullies, I simply refused. When I was counseled falsely, I simply refused. When I got in trouble over it, still, I refused.

When I was required to do unsafe things, I refused. When I was asked by a school principal to do immoral things, I refused. When I was required to teach contrary to what I thought was right, I refused.

And always, people recognized the innate certainty of my refusal and soon ceased attempting to control me. And the fact that I have lost so much, time and time again, has never altered the quality of my refusal.

I WILL NOT Let You Go! Jacob had God in his grip, and he REFUSED to let go.

Sam Fife preached this same word about Jacob into me over forty years ago, and through all these years, it is this word, “I will NOT let You go,” that has given me the authority to do what I would do, and that is REFUSE to release God from my grip. In the darkness, in the pain and grief, two characters of the Bible have been my guide all the way through – Abraham and Jacob.

And yet now, this line, “I will NOT let You go until You bless me,” has taken on a dimension of life and reality, I have never known before.

The Night’s Events. Before we arrive at this present understanding, however, let’s set out the specifics of this passage from Genesis 32.

1. Jacob is alone in the night, having surrendered everything and everyone belonging to him.
2. Jacob grabs hold of a man to wrestle with him, a man whom Jacob soon perceives to be God in the flesh.
3. God tries to break free from Jacob’s grip, but is unable to do so.
4. God touches Jacob to cripple him so that Jacob will never again be strong in himself; Jacob has lost everything.
5. God commands Jacob to let Him go.

Jacob Refuses to “Obey.”

6. Jacob REFUSES to “obey” God; he REFUSES to let go.
7. Jacob voices his refusal, “I will NOT let You go.”
8. Then Jacob states specifically what he requires of God, “Until You bless me.” And we must define this word “bless” in its largest possible meanings.
9. God asks Jacob for his name, and Jacob replies, “Jacob”, that is, “I am a supplanter.” – This is me!
10. God changes Jacob’s name to Israel, a prince of God.

11. God gives His reason for changing Jacob to Israel, “For you have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed.”

God Face to Face.

12. Then Jacob asks God for His name.

13. God answers only with the question, “Why do you ask?”

14. God “blesses” Jacob right on the spot, referencing back to the blessing Jacob had received from Isaac, that is, the inheritance.

15. Jacob then says, “I have seen God face to face, and I am still alive!”

16. Jacob limps for the rest of his life.

17. Jacob walks in quiet confidence in God from then on, never again as “Jacob the supplanter,” but as Israel, the man who never lets go of God.

My Definition of “Bless Me.” When I left the move of God fellowship, I kept five gospel verses as the guide and desire of my life. I had zero idea what any of them meant, but I knew that God had spoken them, and I knew that He MUST do what He says in me.

Those five gospel verses were – conformed with the image of His Son – filled with all the fullness of God – rivers of Spirit flowing out – casting down the accuser – and entering boldly into all of God.

Here is my definition of the word, “Bless me, God.” “God, You WILL DO, and You WILL BE inside of me, all that You mean by these words that You wrote in my Bible.”

Filled with God. You see, I must first justify the meaning I hope to give you for **“I will not let You go until You bless me.”**

Filled with all the fullness of God. – I have been thinking about this line and what on earth it might mean for over thirty years now. It is my most frequent and regular thought from Scripture, “God, You fill me with all that You are.”

Working with the JSV translation has shown us just how much the concept of God inside of us and we inside of God fills the Bible. I wrote the *Symmorphy* texts because I wanted to discover what on earth God was up to by filling me with Himself.

Knowing God-with-Me. Bit by bit, over the last few years, I have come to see from Scripture that God Himself lives inside of me, sharing Himself with me and sharing me with Himself as one person together.

And I have come to see that Jesus lives inside my heart to make this connection between my Father and myself to be my reality every moment.

Writing a clear and logical explanation of this incredible reality, out from verses of the Bible, does not fit in this space, but it’s something I must consider. Here, we simply want to rest ourselves in the sweet knowing of God-with-me.

Our Right. We must understand the psychology, that is, the mind that thinks Father-with-me.

First, here is our RIGHT to think “Father-with-me.” – If anyone loves Me, My word he will keep, and My Father will love him, and We will come to and will make Our home with him in intimate closeness (John 14:23).

Yet this very line also presents the great battle taking place between heaven and hell, a battle inside our own minds. For EVERY voice will come to you, from within and without, and will argue in all wailing cries against you, that you have no right to claim such a reality for yourself.

I Refuse! I **don't** care; they can stick it up their nose. I REFUSE to let go of Father-with me. – I refuse!

When I first knew that Christ was my only life, that I had no other life but Jesus, and that I lived only inside of Him, I spent the next nine months under continual mental and spiritual assault. Every voice I had ever heard, all throwing Bible verses at me, all declaring my inadequacy, my contrary-to-God nature, my false self-exaltation, screamed in my mind.

For nine months I REFUSED to let go of Christ my ONLY life. These letters I send to you are the fruit of my refusal.

The Mind of Christ. The psychology of “Father-with me” means living by our possession of the mind of Christ. And “psychology” means nothing more than an orderly study of how our mind and emotions and desires work: *psyche* - soul.

He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit with Him. God shares my soul with me, and I share God's soul with Him, and we connect together through Jesus in our hearts.

My Father, Himself in Person, is part of my construction, of the beating of my heart, the whisperings of my mind. He energeoes His desire inside of me. And I am inside of my Father just as much.

I Will NOT Let You Go! When I led you in vocalized prayer together casting down the falseness sitting upon the Church, I knew that I was leading us into a literal battle and that we would be hit hard.

Even before we finished the first prayer, I was being hit by voices of “who do you think you are.” In fact, I felt like Jacob, with my hip out of joint. By the next day, I was in the agony that I was moving in gross presumption in sharing all this stuff about all these people in my autobiography.

But I know our enemy and his foolish tricks, and I did what I always do. “God, my Father, You share my life with me. I will not let You go, for You belong to me.”

Because You Have Done This Thing. Then we hear God speaking the same word to us, “Because you have done this thing.” – “You have seized hold of God and have prevailed.”

The entirety of the battle is inside the human soul, our minds, our desires, and our emotions. The SOUL that seizes hold of God with me, Father Himself, part of me, sharing my life with me, and I with Him, and never letting go, regardless of whatever, this is the normal human life.

This is how we overcome. This is the proving of Jesus faithful and true. And the reward of our blessing? – We are just like Him.

Reading for Next Time. The next lesson is on Joseph, except we are focusing on only one aspect, and that is the relationship between Joseph and the word God speaks, both Joseph in his own faith, and Joseph as a metaphor of storing up word for God’s people.

For next time, read Genesis 37, 39, 40, 41:33-57, 45:1-8, and 50:15-21. Also read Psalm 105:7-22. Then, I would suggest that you skim through this article:

<http://www.s8int.com/joseph.html>

Until the time that his word was fulfilled, the word of the Lord tested him.