

Shadows Of Christ & His Bride

Lesson #18

Encountering Jacob's Staff In My Journey

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Jacob had a long history of being a manipulator and controller.

God broke Jacob: Heb. 11:21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying,

blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.

How did Jacob arrive at this point?

20 years earlier, he had deceitfully acquired Esau's birthright and blessing. [He was 77.]

He fled to live with Uncle Laban where he married Leah & Rachel.

Twenty years later, God told Jacob to return home. [He was 97.]

On his trip back home, Jacob stayed the night by himself at the brook, Jabbok.

Gen. 32:24-25 And Jacob was left alone;

and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

²⁵ 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, as he wrestled with him.

Wrestling encounter that night: Goal > get rid of his self-sufficiency.

His name was changed to Israel.

Notice in Heb 11 the record of the great faith of some in the OT: shutting lions' mouths, raising the dead, tortured, stoned, sawn in half, living in caves, destitute etc.

Jacob is included in the Hall of Faith. "He worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff."

This seems insignificant in a chapter full of spectacular events!

Is this truly a "miracle of faith?" Absolutely!

Ravenhill: Everyone wants to be clothed with power, but no one wants to be stripped of self.

Jacob's staff changed from a symbol of striving and manipulation to a symbol of brokenness.

His staff now represents dependence on God and was necessary to help him walk.

Consider: God meets us at the level He finds us in order to lift us up to where He wants us to be. Leaning upon that staff, he would always remember the miracle that God had wrought in his life, in breaking his stubborn self-will.

Leaning upon his staff symbolized his helpless, moment-by-moment dependence on God.

He worshipped God as a broken man. He gloried in his weakness and his infirmity.

What a wonderful thing to be purged by God. It results in fruitfulness for the Lord.

Jabbok: #H2999 = emptying; pouring forth

The Jabbok River is one of the principal tributaries of the Jordan River and one of the major watercourses of the Promised Land. Before he could enter the Promised Land, he had to be broken of his self-sufficiency and independent spirit.

Jacob wrestled with a man [pre-incarnate Jesus Christ] all night long and was blessed.

Absolute Surrender: Potter's wheel; unflinching obedience to the commands of Christ;

Life-long process of surrendering to Him.

After a very troublesome life, Jacob, 130 yrs., enjoyed 17 years of remarkable comfort living with his sons, grandsons and great-grandsons in the rich land of Goshen, the best land of Egypt. Pharaoh gave them the area east of the Lower Nile, called Goshen, as a place to live and raise their livestock [Gen. 46:28—47:1-6]. Its fertile soil was ideal for pasturing animals.

Pharaoh entrusted his own royal livestock to the Israelites [Gen. 47:6].

Goshen was a place under God's protection, exempt from many of the plagues of Egypt.

- Israel's family was reconciled to one another.
- Goshen provided sustenance in a time of famine.
- Place where God displayed His protective power.

Ex. 1:7 And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them.

However, the land of Goshen was also a place where they experienced great suffering, a place from which they needed to be rescued.

Goshen also became a temptation for the Israelites as an idealized place to return to when following God felt too demanding. [Ex. 16:3; Num. 11:4-6; 14:3-4; 21:4-5 and more]

Instead of remembering Goshen as a place where God proved His ability to provide and displayed His trustworthiness to redeem, the people imagined it as a place of prosperity where there was no need to trust God.

When trusting God was difficult, there was a temptation to turn away from the Lord and return to Goshen in Egypt.

Spurgeon: "Death is a thorough test of faith.

Beneath the touch of the skeleton finger shams dissolve into thin air, and only truth remains. It is hard, very hard, to maintain a lie in the presence of the last solemn moments; the end of life is usually the close of self-deception.

There is a mimic faith, a false assurance, which lasts under all ordinary heats of trial, but this evaporates when the fires of death surround it."

Scripture tells us the patriarch's faith was firm while he was dying. His words spoke not of murmurs, but plentiful benedictions, as he blessed both the sons of Joseph.

He believed God. He believed that God spoke by him; and he believed that God would justify every word that he was uttering. [Jacob is 147 years old.]

Heb. 11:21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.

Spurgeon: In Hebrews 11, the author is "walking through the histories and picking a flower here and a flower there. He complains that time fails him even in doing that, so fertile is the garden of faith." He does not say anything about Jacob's life but selects the death scene.

It seems the best thing in Jacob's life was its close.

Spurgeon: Jacob was more royal between the curtains of his bed than at the door of his tent: greater in the hour of his weakness than in the day of his power.

Gen. 48:3-4 He said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, and said to me, 'Behold I will make you fruitful, and multiply you, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession.

Fast-forward: Each descendant of Jacob came to worship on the top of his staff at last, for on the Passover supper night, when the blood was sprinkled on the lintel and the side-posts, each one ate the lamb with their loins girt, shoes on their feet and with a staff in his hand. Passover meal was a festival of worship, and each one ate it leaning on his staff.

Gen. 48: God's Promises Never Fail: The blessing he gave to the sons of Joseph was an utterance of his firm faith in the covenant which gave the land to him and to his seed. Jacob's legacies were all blessings which he possessed by faith only. He did not give each of them any portion in Goshen; each had a lot in Canaan. Did that belong to him to give them? Yes, in one sense, but not in another. God had promised it to him, but he had not yet a foot of land in it. The Canaanites were swarming in the land; they were living in cities walled up to heaven and held the country by the right of possession.

But Jacob talks about Canaan as if it was all his own.

He sees by faith the tribes growing into nations as if they were already in actual possession.

Key: By faith we believe in things not yet seen.

We confess that, like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we are strangers here, and are journeying towards a place of which God has spoken to us: "A city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Faith is needed to enable us to point men to the invisible and eternal.

We have learned to talk about the crown which the Lord has laid up for us, and not for us only but for all those who love His appearing. We delight to tell others how to win this crown.

We point them to the narrow gate and to the narrow way, neither of which they can see, and to the end of that narrow road, even to the hilltops crowned with the celestial city where the pilgrims of the Lord shall dwell forever and enjoy an eternal reward.

We can do nothing for our fellow men by way of promoting their spiritual and eternal interests if we walk according to the sight of our eyes; but when we get into the power of God, and grasp His promise by a daring confidence, then it is that we obtain the power to bless.

Worshiped By Faith

Truth: One cannot worship God without faith.

Heb. 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

Gen. 48:11 And Israel said unto Joseph, I did not think I would see thy face: and, lo, God hath let me see thy seed also. [Jacob's gratitude]

Spurgeon: "Oh Lord, I had not thought that you would do as much as this, but you have gone far beyond what I asked or even thought."

The God we serve always by His deeds of grace exceeds our greatest expectations.

Worshiped By His Testimony

Gen. 48:15c The God which fed me [who was a shepherd to me] all my life long unto this day, Jacob does not murmur now and declare that all things are against him. Now he no longer quarrels and frets and makes rash declarations; now he does not even make a bargain with God. There's also a revelation of the Messiah, who had been promised to Jacob's people.

Gen. 49:10, 18, 24, 25: Shiloh, Salvation, the Mighty One, the Shepherd, the Stone and the Almighty. All point to our Savior.

He finishes his life by magnifying the goodness of the Lord.

Worshiped The Angel who redeemed him from all evil. [Gen. 48:16a]

Jesus Christ, The Angel, who wrestled with him, who appeared to him when he fell asleep at Bethel. Jesus Christ is the messenger of the covenant.

Do you remember when He came to you personally, and wrestled with you and tore away your self-righteousness, and made you limp upon your thigh? Do you remember when he took your strength away from you? You learned only as you became consciously weak would you become actually strong. You learned to look beyond self to Jesus.

Do you not thank Him for having taught you such a lesson?

Spurgeon: Oh, my brethren, we owe all things to the redeeming Angel of the covenant.

The evils which He has warded off from us are terrible beyond conception.

The blessings He has brought us are rich beyond imagination.

Though we do not see Him, we must in life and in death by faith worship Him with lowly love.

Worshiped Leaning On His Staff

Remember Jacob's words in Gen. 32:10 I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant;

for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands.

Jacob reminded the Lord of the promises He had made to him at Bethel [28:12-15].

God would do him good and multiply his descendants. God told Jacob that He would be with him and bring him back to Bethel, and that He would accomplish His purposes in and through him.

He claimed God's promises, remembered God's goodness, and rested completely on God's character and covenant. No matter what circumstances we may face or what fears may grip our hearts, we can trust God to be faithful to His character and His Word.

Now Jacob expresses his deep humility and gratitude before God. He is not demanding anything.

He describes himself as unworthy of even the smallest things God has done out of His love for and faithfulness to Jacob. Jacob recognizes he would have no possessions to lose now if it weren't for God. Leaving his homeland, he owned nothing but his staff.

He had fled as a direct result of his own manipulations and schemes [Gen. 27:30-35; 27:41-45].

Now he possesses enough property, servants, and livestock to fill two large camps.

He supports himself upon his staff and for the last time worships God in the attitude of one who longs to be taken to his heavenly home. [Gen. 48 - 49]

With his son Joseph as the prime minister of Egypt, his family lacked nothing.

Most of us would have been tempted to settle our roots in this place.

This last 17 years must have been the best of his life.

Spurgeon: But sense has not killed his faith; luxury has not destroyed his spirituality.

His heart is still in the tents where he had lived as a sojourner with God.

Not one single root in his soul had taken hold upon Egypt.

Carry my body to Canaan and bury me in Machpelah. We are not Egyptians.

Our inheritance is Canaan. Hold loosely all the good land they possessed in Goshen.

His faith suggested: let go of the present and grasp the future. He renounced the temporal and seized the eternal, refusing the treasures of Egypt and clinging to the covenant of God.

Genesis 49 paints a picture of Jacob's firm faith when he was dying. His faith in God is revealed as he pronounces blessings and prophecies upon his sons and the sons of Joseph.

Gen. 49:1-2, 33 And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days. Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father.

³³And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.

Spurgeon: Brothers, your home is up there, on the other side of the desert,

where God has mapped out your portion. Christ has gone to prepare your place.

The longer you live the more let this thought grow in your mind: "Give me my staff. I must be gone. Poor world, you are no rest for me. I am an alien and a stranger. My citizenship is in heaven. Worship on the top of your staff and sing:

A scrip on my back, and a staff in my hand,

I march on in haste through an enemy's land;

There is nothing on earth which can tempt me to stay,

My staff is the emblem of "up and away."

With only his staff, he had crossed over Jordan many years before; and now he had his staff with him as he crossed to the other side. He was a pilgrim to the very end.

Carl Brettle, while visiting a museum in Jerusalem, investigated a collection of unassuming wooden rods and staffs which were covered in all manner of markings and scratches.

He discovered that Israelite shepherds would mark their staff to remember the times when they saw God's protection and provision over them and their flocks.

These markings were creating an intricate portrait of God's character and His incredible goodness. These shepherds didn't allow themselves to forget God's goodness; every little thing God had done for them could be remembered by looking back over their staff.

Perhaps each time Jacob had an experience with God, he took a knife and cut a ring around his staff as a reminder of what happened. The rings started at the bottom and worked their way to the top. One would surely have symbolized the night he wrestled with God and his name was changed to "Israel...a prince...with God" [Genesis 32:28]. Another would have represented the night God showed him a vision of a ladder extending into heaven with angels on it.

Perhaps as Jacob was nearing the end of his life, he looked back at his staff, covered from top to bottom in markings and was reminded of the miracle that God had wrought in his life, in breaking his stubborn self-will. Other markings reminded him of incredible testimony after incredible testimony. It is no wonder he died worshiping God as he leaned on his staff.

Insert: Personal Testimony: My Dad's last few days on earth.

Perhaps we should rehearse the scene of our own departure,

for very soon everyone's story will be told beginning with — "When he was dying."

Project your mind a little forward to the time when you must gather up your feet in the bed, pronounce your last farewell, and yield up the ghost."

Swindoll: Your legacy is not about you. It is about God working through you for His glory.

May your faith and mine be such that whenever we shall be dying, our faith will perform some illustrious exploit so that the grace of God may be admired in us.

Spurgeon: When the death dew lies cold upon the brow, and the pulse is failing, and the throat is gradually choking up, it will be blessed to fix the eye upon the faithful promiser and to feel a calm within the soul which even death pangs cannot disturb. I can then exclaim, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to him until that day."