

**Genesis 33: 1-16; “The Face of God in Esau”, Sermon # 92 in the series – “Beginnings”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018, in the Morning Worship Service.**

The two brothers, Jacob and Esau, are finally now to meet. And what will happen? That is the question in Jacob’s mind. He has just the night before, wrestled with the Angel; the pre-incarnate Son of God, and prevailed. Having seen God face to face and having lived to tell about it; now it does not seem quite so difficult to face his brother. He still has his fears about Esau, but now his attitude is different. He has prayed, and he has wrestled, and he has received a great blessing from God. Now he can go forward.

Where does the confidence come from, to be able to face our greatest fears? It comes from having been with God in prayer, wrestling through the issues of our lives. Jacob “lifted up his eyes and looked, and there, Esau was coming, and with him were the four hundred men.” It is a good thing when we can come to the place where we can say, “God has dealt graciously with me, and I have enough”. God is our all-sufficient portion in this life and the next. “I know that whatever befalls me, Jesus does all things well,” as the hymn-writer says.

When you are blessed by God with the blessings of salvation in Jesus Christ, you have enough. If you will notice; both Esau and Jacob said that they had enough in this text. Esau says it first in verse 9, when Jacob tells him of the gift that he has for him. “I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself.” And Jacob says it in verse 11, “Please take my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough.” The words “enough” that were spoken by Jacob and Esau, in the original language, are two different words. The word “enough” that Esau spoke means that he had enough worldly goods that he did not need Jacob’s gift.

But the word “enough” that Jacob spoke means “all things”. “God has dealt graciously with me, and because of His graciousness to me, I have “all things”. Jacob has “all things” because he has God for his God. Even so, all those who have Jesus Christ for their Savior have “all things” as well. The question that I pose to you this morning is this. What are the “all things” that Jacob has, which Esau does not have, even though Esau says that he has enough? I think that if we look at the text that we can see that there are 4 things which were manifested in Jacob’s spirit, which show us that God had dealt graciously with him. They show that he indeed had “all things”.

**1<sup>st</sup> – Jacob had a courageous Christ-like spirit.** (verses 1-4)

Before, when Jacob realized that Esau was coming with 400 armed men, he was greatly afraid, and so he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks and the herds, into two companies. At this point, where we are reading, he divides the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two maidservants. He puts the maidservants and their children in front, then Leah and her children behind, and Rachel and Joseph last. It would appear that he is doing this to guard what was most precious to himself in terms of his love to them. But then he does something that he did not do the night before.

It says in verse 3 that he then, crossed over before them and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. The night before he wrestled; here he bows down before Esau to show his submission to God’s will. There must have been at least one more stream after the Jabbok that Jacob and his families had to cross. Because the previous evening he had sent his wives and servants across the ford of the Jabbok, it says in verse 23 of chapter 32. Now here, again, they are crossing over a river or stream to meet Esau.

There are sometimes “many rivers to cross” in our lives; each one needing our individual attention, if we are the head of a household or a leader in the church. You have probably heard the expression, “We will cross that river when we come to it.” In the Christian life there are

times for prayer alone with God, wrestling with him over the issues of our life, and there are also those are the times when we stay behind. Those are the times when we draw apart to be with God alone. And then there are times for decided and deliberate action, where we go before those who are under our charge. To discern when we should do the one and when we should do the other requires a Christ-like spirit.

Now, I do not think that we should misconstrue Jacob's actions here, as though his meekness in bowing down to Esau, was weakness in Him. Instead, I believe that we ought to think the very opposite. Jacob had obtained the birthright and the blessing from his brother by tricky scheming and deception. He had lived by his boldness and cleverness before. But at this time, he was, in good faith, showing his repentance toward Esau and his faith in God. He was "ordering his way aright" before God, and Esau, in this situation.

His "going before" his wife and children was to show Esau the respect due to an elder brother that had been offended, was showing forth the hope that he had that they will be reconciled to each other. These were entirely appropriate actions in this situation. If Jacob had not sinned against Esau twenty years before, in the way that he did, to obtain the blessing of Isaac, then these actions might be construed as related only to a sinful fear in Jacob. But this was not the fear of man which brings a snare that was being exhibited by Jacob here.

These were the actions of humility and his repenting of his past methods which he had used to get what he wanted, by using cunning and trickery. He was saying that he was seeking forgiveness, reconciliation and the restoration of their relationship by these actions. The reason that I say that Jacob had a Christ-like spirit in this situation is because of what we read concerning the arrest of our Lord Jesus in Garden of Gethsemane which is found in the accounts of Matthew and John's gospels. I believe that what the Lord Jesus was doing in that garden, was done for sinful Jacob. Indeed it was done for all people who know themselves to be sinful and who need a Savior.

What our Lord Jesus did there would form the basis for all that Jacob was enabled to do, and to receive, and to give, when he met Esau on that memorable day. In our text, Jacob was looking forward to what God would do to help him. And all that God would do to help him, would be based on the grace which Christ purchased at the cross for him, at a much later time. But the proof of what I am saying to you is in the fact that Jacob wrestled with the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus Christ the night before this incident.

When the "Angel" allowed Jacob to prevail there, it was as much as His saying – I will die for you Jacob, so that this great thing can come to pass. I will die so that you can be reconciled to your brother; yes, I will do this. But I will die also, and more importantly, so that you may be reconciled to God, and come to have a new heart that does things differently from what you sinfully did in your natural strength before. Let's look at Matthew 26: 36 first. It says, "Then Jesus came with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and said to them, 'Sit here while I go and pray over there.'"

Our Lord Jesus drew apart to pray and wrestle with God over the issues, before He was arrested and went to the cross. "And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed." "Then He said to them, 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death.' "Stay here and watch with me." "He went a little farther and fell on his face, and prayed saying, 'O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.'" "Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, 'What?' "Could you not watch with me one hour?" We see here that Peter and the others could not watch with Him one hour, and Peter would even deny His Lord three times that night.

Jesus must wrestle and pray and prevail with His Father so that sinners like Peter and Jacob could be saved, and helped to face the greatest distresses of their lives; distresses that had come

to them because of their sin. So too, we must have Christ and His blessed work in prayer in the Garden, so that we will be able to pray. We must have Christ and His blessed work of resolution to go to remember the cross, and what the Lord Jesus suffered in order that we might be able to take holy initiative, and pick up our own cross, in the way that Jacob did with Esau that day, to bow to him.

And what did Jacob do? He crossed the stream ahead of those whom he loved, in order to face whatever he would suffer from Esau, in the hope that those whom he loved would be spared. His was a Christ-like spirit. For this same kind of action was what the Lord Jesus did before he was crucified. Jesus says in Matthew 26: 45 – “Behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.” “Rise, let us be going.” “See, My betrayer is at hand.”

And in John 18: 1 it says, “When Jesus had spoken these words, He went out with His disciples over the Brook Kidron...” And in verse 4, it says there – “Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, ‘Whom are you seeking?’ He asked this of them twice, and then in verse 8 He says, “I have told you that I am He.” “Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way, that the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, ‘of those whom You gave Me I have lost none.’”

These are the actions that make me think of Jacob in our text. Jacob also crossed a river that day. He showed submission and respect to his brother, to whom he would show his repentance and changed life to. He could do this because Christ would pray, because Christ would die, and because Christ would rise again. The Lord Jesus had no sins to atone for, but Jacob did.

But Christ would die so that Jacob could bow; first to God and His way of doing things, and then to his brother, in order to show him his repentance. “He bowed himself seven times, until he came near to his brother.” He could have tried foolishly to defend himself with a sword, like Peter tried to defend his Master when they came to take Him. But that would not have been the right way here. Esau must see a different Jacob. And he did, and that is why their meeting turned out so well.

It was God who Jacob wrestled with first, and Jacob prevailed with Him beforehand. It was God who worked in Esau's heart to soften and change it enough, through the means that Jacob used, so that the outcome was astoundingly good. They were reconciled. “But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.” They both did this! They both have enough! But Jacob has more. He has the grace and forgiveness of God. And he had a Christ-like spirit.

**2<sup>nd</sup> – Jacob had a thankful spirit for God’s blessings on his family.** (verses 5-7)

“And Esau lifted his eyes and saw the women and children, and said, ‘Who are these with you?’ “So Jacob said, “These are the children whom God has graciously given your servant.” I wonder this morning if each of us here understands the richness of the blessings of a family; to have a wife and children who will follow your lead into living a godly life? Jacob certainly did. He could have simply told Esau that these were his wives and children and not said a word more. But he says, “These are the children whom God has graciously given your servant.”

If you are a husband or a father, are you thankful to God in this way that Jacob was thankful before God and Esau, when he said these things? Do you express your love and appreciation toward God for what He has done for you when you are in the presence of unbelieving family members, as the truth of your heart? Jacob did not fail to do so. It should be a lesson to us. “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one,” the apostle Paul says in Colossians 4: 6. One of the ways that you can do this is when you can speak of what God has done for you in giving you a wife and children who follow your lead.

“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” “Children are a gift of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is a reward.” Jacob well knew that these things were true; and, O how thankful he was for it. Esau may ride up with an entourage of 400 men and be very showy and impressive at his first meeting. But does he have the gift of God which is a godly wife and children? I think not. Who is the better off? Surely it is the Christian man with his seemingly less impressive entourage of a wife and children.

Do not be fooled by the world’s view of what is significant. It is the Christian family that is impressive and significant in God’s sight; not a man running around the countryside with 400 armed men. This is how God views it, no matter what worldly men may think. Jacob has more than enough; he has all things. When God saw fit to give him a wife and children that would follow him and learn the way of the Lord, they really did follow his lead, and they all came and bowed to Esau to show him respect, even as Jacob had done. They acted in unison as a family, which was of great value and a great blessing to this godly man.

**3<sup>rd</sup> – Jacob had a generous spirit, having been reconciled to God and to his brother.** (verses 8-11)

“Then Esau said, ‘What do you mean by all this company which I met?’ He means all of the flocks and the herds that were Jacob’s present to him. Jacob says to him, “These are to find favor in the sight of my lord.” Esau had already had this explained to him by the servants who had been leading the droves. But he wanted to hear it from Jacob himself. Now that he sees that Jacob is no threat to him, in the sense of the things that were important to him, he is therefore able to say, “I have enough, my brother; you keep what you have for yourself”.

Now we can really see that Jacob has “all things”, but that Esau has only this world to hold on to. Jacob, we know was wealthy because it said so in Genesis 30: 43. “Thus the man was prosperous, and had large flocks, female and male servants and camels and donkeys.” He had been made wealthy by God’s prospering him, even though Laban had been so stingy with him. Now Jacob desires to take of his wealth and use it in a way that he would find favor in the sight of his brother. Jacob reasons this way. If God has been so generous and gracious to me, as He has; then I can afford to be generous and gracious with this, my brother, who I “stole” the blessing from, before.

But Esau will not take it. He does not think that he needs anything more than he has. He has everything of this world’s goods that he thinks that he needs. And he does not think at all about what it would mean to have spiritual blessings from God. But Jacob is insistent, and in his insistence he will preach the gospel to his lost brother. He says in verse 10, “No, please, if I have now found favor in your sight, then receive my present from my hand, inasmuch as I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God, and you were pleased with me.”

What a statement this is! Jacob is here comparing the face of Esau and finding favor with him, to the face of God and finding favor with God! Jacob is comparing Esau’s showing him a kindly face and showing him his favor, to God’s showing him a kindly face and favor. Even as God had shown Jacob favor, and Jacob would bring a present to him, even so, now Jacob would bring a present to Esau, now that he knows that they are reconciled. He had sent this present on before him, to appease Esau’s anger, but Esau forgave him of the past sins even before the explanation was given.

Jacob knew that only God could produce such a change in Esau. He knew that the change of attitude did not mean that Esau was a saved man, or a godly man, but it did mean that God was sovereignly working so that he could be reconciled to his brother in peace. “Please, take my blessing (that is, my gift) that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough(all).” It is only one who has been taught by grace himself, that can teach what grace is like to another. And of course, for it to be truly understood by Esau, it would require God’s working in his heart as well. But Jacob would try to make him understand. It

says, “So he urged him, and he took it”. Jacob knows that “the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable” and that there is no chance that he will lose the spiritual blessings that had been bestowed upon him, by his father, those many years ago. But he would show Esau this gospel of reconciliation and grace if he can, because God had dealt graciously with him. He could be very generous, because God had been generous to him.

Let me ask you this morning if this is you, my friend? Do you, as a Christian seek to be reconciled to those who have been offended by you in the past, because you now see that the way you spoke, or the way that you did things in relation to them, was not right, in the past? If you do seek reconciliation, do you see the importance of having a generous conciliatory spirit, as Jacob had? Because you have been forgiven a great debt, you can forgive the debts of others. Because you have been given the gift of eternal life and abundant grace, you can now exhibit a generous spirit towards those who you have previously offended.

All this comes when you realize that God has dealt graciously with you. You may need to urge the person that you are now thinking of, to take your gift and to receive your words, even as you would urge a person that you wanted to see come to know Christ, to take of that free gift of being reconciled to God, when they are reluctant. When you do this, you are saying, “I have enough”. “I have all things.” “I want you to have all things as well.” Esau took the gift, but I fear that he never came to understand the grace of God that was being communicated, in its being given.

Oh may this not be you this morning, if you have never come to know God through Jesus Christ. I urge you to take the free gift of salvation which is found in Jesus Christ today. But do not merely be satisfied with the worldly blessings that come to you if you begin to live according to Biblical principles. Do not be satisfied until you have come to experience all the spiritual blessings which Christ died to bring to you, a sinner. Jacob had all, but Esau had only the blessings of this life. I urge you to seek for more than worldly wealth, more than mere earthly blessings. Seek for it by faith in Jesus Christ and by living in accordance with Bible truth.

**And 4<sup>th</sup> – Jacob had a tender and compassionate spirit for those who were weaker.**  
(verses 12-16)

“Then Esau said, ‘Let us take our journey; let us go, and I will go before you.’ You can imagine that if you are a man like Esau, and you are riding with 400 men, that it would seem a strange thing to stay very long at a family reunion with your men not being relatives. Esau would return to Seir, and he have Jacob to follow him quickly. He is probably excited to show off the place where he resides. But Jacob politely declines his offer to jump up and leave immediately, and he has very good reasons for doing so.

“My lord knows that the children are weak, and the flocks and herds which are nursing are with me.” “And if the men should drive them hard one day, all the flock will die.” “Please let my lord go on ahead before his servant.” “I will lead on slowly at a pace which the livestock that go before me, and the children are able to endure, until I come to my lord in Seir.” If Jacob was the kind of person that was simply interested in making an impression upon Esau, realizing the way that Esau lived, and wanting to keep up with him, he would have said to his wife and children and servants. “I am going with Esau to Seir.” “I will leave you to follow and catch up with us when you can.”

But that is not what Jacob did. He showed where his greatest love and his priorities lay. It was with his family. And even when Esau offered to leave some of his people with Jacob to strengthen him and protect him and help him in the journey, Jacob declines this as well. “What need is there?” And yet he still asks to find favor in Esau’s sight in this regard. So Esau returned that day, to Seir, and Jacob, we must assume went and saw where he lived at a later time.

I think that we can say by way of conclusion that Jacob was indeed a man whom God had been gracious to, when we see that he was willing to decline this offer of Esau’s to try to keep

pace with him. A godly man does not feel the need to keep pace with men of culture and the world. He does see his highest priority lies with God, and with his family. His highest priority lay in doing things as God would have them done; considering the needs of the weak under his charge. He was tender and compassionate toward the needs of his family, and his loved ones.

A godly man will show respect for his relatives and want to spend some time with them. But he will not allow them to drag him along with them into all of their interests, unless he sees that it would be profitable for his family, and that God Himself would be pleased with it. Jacob had all things in having God as his God. He had been taught by God to have a Christ-like spirit. He was thankful that God had been gracious to him in giving him this family and these flocks. He was going to take good care of them.

God had so ordered things, and had so worked, that his relationship with Esau was now restored, and he had even gotten to share the gospel of the grace of God in the midst of being reconciled. Truly he had all things and was blessed. In closing I want to point out to you that the greatest thing in this life is when you come to realize that when you believe in Jesus Christ, you have all things. You are truly able to say that you have enough, even though you may not have great earthly riches.

You do not feel that you have to have all of these earthly things to be happy or to be satisfied, when you have Christ. And that is because your spirit has been changed by His grace. You are finding your satisfaction in your relationship with God, and yet you now find that you are looking out for the interests of others besides yourself. Esau had enough for himself, and for this life, but enough is not enough if it is only for this life. Each of us must have Christ to have the forgiveness of our sins.

Each of us must have Christ to have eternal life, and to come to know God. Each of us must have Christ to see the sinful direction of our heart change in a way that honors God and will be truly helpful to other people. Christ gives a greater grace, for He gives us all things necessary for life and for godliness; for this life and the next. Your spirit changes when His grace is at work. Jacob's did. And that is what made all the difference in God's sight and in his relationship with Esau. May it be so for you as well.