

“I will not let you go except you bless me” (Genesis 32: 26). In the truest sense, the whole message of the book of Genesis is summed up in the words of Jacob as he held on for blessing to the Angel of the Lord. God’s “hands-on” grace directed Jacob’s life, and there is simply nothing more important for us to do with the power which God’s Spirit gives us by working faith in us. We must wrestle with God, pleading with Him to bestow His blessing on our lives and the lives of His people under our care as parents, pastors, deacons or elders. May these notes inspire us so to do.

**Monday: Read Genesis 32:26; John 10:10; 14:19 and Galatians 2:20**

**Wrestling for Blessing**

Whether in the Old Testament or in the New, the power to wrestle for God’s blessing is a crucial duty which we cannot attain in our own strength. It is not the power of our faith, our prayers or even our tears which can bring the blessing down. It is the power of Christ at work in both Testaments which alone brings God’s blessing.

Christ is the head of all the saints; and He is a living head, a living head that tells us, “Because He lives we shall live also” (Jn. 14:19). He communicates spiritual life to all that are His. In Him is the fountain of our life. And this life He gives unto His saints by quickening of them by His Spirit (Rom. 8:11). He continues this life unto them by the supplies of living grace which He communicates unto them. From these two, His quickening of us, and continually giving out supplies of life unto us, He is said to live in us: Galatians 2:20, “I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me;” – “The spiritual life which I have is not mine own; not from myself was it drawn forth, not by myself is it maintained, but it is merely and solely the work of Christ: so that it is not I that live, but He lives in me, the whole of my life being from Him alone.”

Neither does this living head communicate only a bare life unto believers, that they should merely live and no more, a poor, weak, dying life, as it were; but He gives out sufficiently to afford them a strong, vigorous, thriving, flourishing life, John 10:10.

John Owen, Works, Vol. 6 pg. 286

**Meditate and Pray:** Lord, we are weak, dying and helpless unless you infuse us with your vigorous, thriving, flourishing life. Help me to hand on to you and wait for your promised blessings, moment by moment.

**Tues/Weds/Thurs: Read Genesis 32:26 and Hosea 12:3-4**

**Broken and Blessed**

From the foundation of the people of Israel to when the book of Hosea was written, hundreds of years later, the wrestling of Jacob with the Angel of the Lord becomes a model for the believer for how to seek the blessing of God. Confirming this for us, James Fisher, 18<sup>th</sup> century commentator on the Westminster Shorter Catechism, describes the Spirit’s wrestling within us for God’s blessing: “The Spirit intercedes *within* us, by bringing the promise to our remembrance, John 14:26, and enabling us to importune a faithful God, to *do* as he has *said*, and not to let him go, except he bless us. (Gen. 32:26)”

Scarcely any other Old Testament character so aptly demonstrates the Spirit’s aid for a weak saint than Jacob. Jacob is brought down by God to the lowest point of his life as he faces the terrifying prospect of meeting his brother Esau. A cunningly self-reliant saint, Jacob is both devastated and also greatly blessed by the appearance of the “Angel of the Lord.” Having been wounded for life by that “Angel,” Jacob holds on to this Divine messenger. Asking for Divine blessing, Jacob obtains it, by faith and by the Spirit’s help, in this wrestling match. I say “by the Spirit’s help” because of the commentary on Genesis 32 which Hosea 12:3-4 gives us – a clear example of God’s helping Jacob in his weakness, when he “did not know how to pray.”

But God meant to express something more... being, as it were, overcome, and yielded the palm of victory to holy Jacob. And this ought not to appear strange to us; for we know that whenever God proves our faith, and tries us by temptations, these are so many combats by which he contends with us; for he seeks to find out what is the strength of our faith. Now, when we are said to wrestle with God, and the issue of the contest be such, that God leaves the victory to us, we are not then improperly called conquerors, yea, even of God himself.

But how can this be? Because God works wonderfully in his saints, so that by his own power he casts down himself; and while he wrestles with us, he supplies us with strength, by which we are enabled to bear the weight and pressure of the contest. Were God to assail us, what would he find but weakness? But when he calls us to the struggle, he at the same time supplies us with the necessary arms.

John Calvin, Commentary on Hosea 12:4

**Meditate and Pray:** Oh Lord, mighty God of Israel and of Jacob! Please overcome us with your blessing! Like Jacob of old, we limp with the wounds of sin and the hurts of this life. But as long as we are energized by your Spirit to hold onto you in faith for your highest and best for our lives, we shall win in the end. Please be the mighty God of Jacob (Psalm 46:11) in our lives. Burn the chariots of our sinful rebelliousness and consume the dross of our deceitful, selfish schemes so that your will can be completely accomplished in us in glory, and begun now in this life with sweet, humbling grace!

We long to eventually arrive at the place where we can be a conduit of blessing to future generations of your church, but right now we acknowledge how much in our lives you must overcome before such blessings will flow cleanly through us! Therefore, with confidence in Jesus Christ, who prayed for us that we might be “sanctified by God’s Word” (John 17:17), we ask you to wrestle us to the ground through your Holy Spirit’s use of that Word to convict us of our sin, so that we might arise as “princes in Israel,” a royal priesthood of willing servants who bless your people in your Name. Amen.

**Fri/Sat/Sun: Read Psalm 118:1-9 and Genesis 49:8-12**

**Shiloh’s Peace**

My, what a helpful Savior King we have in the Lord Jesus! Even before His Incarnation, we see Him not only ordaining all things, including Joseph’s captivity in Egypt; not only over-ruling the sins of the rebellious sons of Jacob – but even by His Spirit inspiring prophets to see far into the future... to the days when “Shiloh” would come and rule over all things for His people. “Shiloh” refers to the Messiah, the Prince of Peace, Jesus, who would rule in the power and peace of the eternal Kingdom of God.

As we hear Jacob on his deathbed speaking God’s prophetic Word of blessing over all his sons, we should marvel at how clearly he speaks of the rule of Christ through the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:8-12). May this passage be one of rich meditation for us, for in it, we see the Holy Spirit pointing through Jacob to the coming of the Son of God to suffer, die, rise and rule in our nature, as 1 Peter 1:10-12 puts it.

Well then, what are we to make of this great passage about the Lion of Judah for today? First, it is His power that comes to the fore. He rules over His enemies and even causes all of God’s people to bow their necks to His rule (Genesis 49:8). It is Christ’s power to put His royal hands on our fevered brows and stiff necks which is the first quality Jacob highlights in his prophetic words, and also the first quality we need in our lives. We need Jesus’ gentle hands, by which He calmed the unbroken colt to ride it on Palm Sunday, to calm us down so that we can willingly allow Him alone to ride on as King over our lives. Oh, Lord, breathe into our rebellious hearts this calming Spirit of your rule over us as the Prince of Peace!

Second, Jacob was under no illusions when it came to the monumental struggle with sin and Satan which his offspring faced as he gathered them together for blessing in Genesis 49:1-2. In fact, he deals head-on with sons who had committed incest, murder and pillaging in verses 3-7! Where could Jacob find strong enough faith to see beyond these terrible crimes to the good which God could bring even out of their repulsive deeds? More important, who could rule such an unruly clan after Jacob dies? These kinds of vexing questions face us, as they did Jacob. Well then – let us fix our eyes on the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:8ff) as the one able to “rule and defend us from all His and our enemies.”

**Meditate and Pray:** Lord Jesus, just as you had that sweet power to enable all the recalcitrant sons of Jacob to eventually bow their knee to the rule of the tribe of Judah, thank you for sending an even greater “Lion of Judah” to rule over our lives. Oh, please exert your rule Jesus! Restrain us from sin! Protect us from being taken captive by Satan’s stratagems and the coveting lusts of our sinful hearts! Cause us to yield to your Lordship in all things! More than such personal submission to your will, we would be bold to ask that you would enable us in Christ to “submit to each other out of reverence for Christ (Ephesians 5:21)!”

And sweetest of all, please enable us to learn the secret that, in submitting to Christ as King and His rule over our wills and lives, we will find the peace and freedom from anxiety which so evades us in the day in which we live. Teach us to welcome King Jesus, even though He wounds us like He did Jacob. Teach us the severe mercy that taught that aged, limping saint to submit to your will. For only in that submission will we subjectively know the peace of our “Shiloh” who objectively purchased that peace for us on the Cross. Amen!