

Growing Through Failure

2018 Mark Beard

Text: Genesis 32:22-31(NIV)

²² That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. ²³ After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. ²⁴ So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. ²⁵ When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. ²⁶ Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

²⁷ The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered.

²⁸ Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome."

²⁹ Jacob said, "Please tell me your name." But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there.

³⁰ So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

³¹ The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip.

Introduction

In the book of Genesis God begins to build a nation of people who will be His people and a people of faith. He began with Abraham and then there was Isaac, and then the focus of our study today—Jacob. Although Isaac's life shows he was struggling to build his faith in God and to be obedient to this new way of faith, Jacob was not known to have the same heart.

Jacob was a deceiver, a manipulator, essentially a con-man by nature. He was accustomed to making things happen on his own. To get his way through his own devices and scheming. Obviously, this was a departure from what God wanted for him, and if the nation of Israel was to be a people of faith, Jacob's heart and life would have to be redirected.

Here in our text, we witness the pivotal moment in which Jacob came to an end of himself and his ability to make things happen by his own strength in his own ingenuity. This is the moment the Jacob's will was broken and that his strength was seen as insufficient. It was the moment he turned to God in his weakness and finally was willing to go God's way.

Let's look at the important *lessons* we can learn from Jacob's experience.

I. The Biggest Spiritual Changes Take Place When We Are Spending Time Alone with God (vv.22-24).

II. Being Honest with God About Ourselves Is the Only Path to Spiritual Growth (vv.25-28).

III. We Must Allow God to Change Us When and How He Chooses (vv.29-31).

Conclusion

Jacob was a man who always felt he had to win no matter what. However, he found there was an end to what he could make happen.

In an interview with GQ magazine, actor Nick Nolte, a man familiar with personal failings, gave this piece of advice, “This is going to sound strange, but my best advice is to accept losing. It’s the grandest thing you can do. We as a culture think it’s a terrible thing to lose, but it’s only through losing that we grow. We don’t grow by winning. And you can’t really communicate or connect with anybody on a meaningful level until you learn how they deal with losing.”

This is a truth Jacob learned the hard way, but it was an important *lesson* for him to learn and that need to learn from Jacob’s experience.