

THE GLORY OF GOD

Romans 8:29—For whom he foreknew, he also [predestined] to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

II Corinthians 4:6—Seeing it is God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

II Corinthians 3:18—But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit.

Genesis 32:24-31—And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. 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 strained, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for thou hast striven with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for, said he, I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. And the sun rose upon him as he passed over Peniel and he limped upon his thigh.

Hebrews 11:21—By faith, Jacob, when he was dying blessed each of the sons of Joseph and worshiped leaning upon the top of his staff.

Lord, we have already prayed for the speaking of Your word, for the translating of it, and for the hearing of it. We just want to recognize, Lord, that without the anointing it will amount to nothing. But You have provided that anointing, and the Holy Spirit makes it a living reality on the basis of Your finished work. We stand into that anointing for the speaking, for the translating, and for the hearing. Meet with us, Lord. Touch us, Lord. Touch us in such a way as You did Jacob and we shall never be the same again. Touch us in such a way, Lord, that we will bear the marks in our being. Hear our prayer, Lord. We are living in such dark days, and the time is so short. Have mercy upon us, Lord, and meet us. We shall be careful to give You all the praise and worship of our hearts for answering this prayer. And we ask it in the name of our Messiah, the Lord Jesus. Amen.

It is the predestined purpose of God that every child of God shall be changed into the likeness of the Lord Jesus. The problem is very simple. It is a question of the Lordship of the Lord Jesus. Where He is Lord, there is transformation, but where you are lord, there is paralysis. You do not grow nor are you changed. The beauty of the Lord is not upon you. It is a question of who is boss. Are you the boss or is He the boss? In practical terms, is it the Lordship of the Spirit? Does He have the keys of your life? of your personal life? of your family life? of your business life? of church life? of the service of God? When we retain the keys, we can be immersed in activity. We can work and work and work. We can have a thousand routines. We can have methodology, techniques, steps to this and

steps to that, but it is our work. It is not the Lord's work. Only when we are co-workers together with God, when we are under His Lordship, then there is all the provision we need.

I cannot think of any subject more important than being transformed into the image of God's Son. Think! You will carry nothing into eternity but what God does in your life. You came into this world naked and you will go out of this world naked. All your money will be left to others. You cannot take a single dollar with you; not a single one. You cannot even take the clothes you are wearing with you, or the jewelry, or the titles before your name, or the degrees after your name, or the property you have. You can take nothing but what God does in you. This is what I mean by facing reality. We spend so much time and energy upon that which we cannot take with us. Spiritual character is the only thing that you take into eternity.

JACOB I HAVE LOVED

In I Corinthians 10:11 we read these amazing words: "Now these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition and instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages are come." I want to talk about one of the most remarkable examples in all the sixty-six books of the Bible, the story of Jacob. It is an example of being transformed into the likeness of the Messiah, and it took all of the power of God, all the grace of God, and all the patience of God. No character in the word of God was more difficult than Jacob. He gave the Lord such a problem. It is amazing that God never called His people *Abraham*. He never called them *Isaac*. He never called them *Joseph*. He never even called them *Moses*. He called them *Jacob*. Jacob and Israel are two names of one man. I think that within that act of God lies your story and my story. The Lord took the lowest denominator and saved him, redeemed him, and transformed him. Here is true predestination.

Why did the Lord do this? Why do we have that incredible statement with which the old covenant ends, "Yet Jacob I have loved" (Malachi 1:2)? Why did God love Jacob? Why did He love him so much? Why did He bring those thirty-nine books of the old covenant to the end with these words, "Yet Jacob I have loved"? Don't ask me. I only know that God loves me, and I find that extraordinary. I give Him so many problems. I argue with Him; I complain; I am always slow to obey Him. I think to myself, "Why does the Lord love me?" But out of that incredible love of God for Jacob came the predestinating power and grace of God. He would not let Jacob go. He followed him; He watched over him; He arranged all his circumstances; He arranged his relationships. Step by step, God brought him to the place where, for the first time, he saw himself. We are not dealing with an unconverted person. This man under the old covenant was a child of God. He bore in his body the mark of circumcision. He was one of God's covenant people. He is one of those to whom God has covenanted to be faithful. He never left him until finally He transformed him.

The story of Jacob is incredible. It is your story and it is my story. Maybe you do not quite see it. Maybe you are too respectable, too sweet, too pure, too un sinful to be able to see yourself as God sees you. But the story of Jacob is your story and it is my story. And the amazing thing is that God can take a man like Jacob and reveal Himself to him: "I have seen God face to face and I have lived." He was never the same again. From then on he bore another mark in his body. He limped for the rest of his life. There is an old

saying: “God can only trust a man who limps.” Only when God has made us lame, only when God has wrecked us, only when God has broken us are we safe.

The name *Jacob* itself is interesting. You will remember the story in Genesis 25. Rebecca became aware that something was happening inside her, and she was having a very bad time. Those two babies were having a fight inside of her. It is not so strange because they spent the rest of their lives fighting with each other; and still do to this day. But she felt something inside her and she inquired of the Lord. And the Lord said, “There are two nations in your womb, and the elder shall serve the younger.” When the time came for them to be born, Esau was the first one by a minute or two, but fast on Esau came Jacob with his arm twisted around the heel of his brother. So his parents called him *Yaaqob*. It is a play on the words “heel” and “twist.” The idea is “supplanter.” The easiest way to understand it is in the English slang, *twister*. His name was *Twister*, and he lived up to it. It was prophetic.

JACOB’S IRREPRESSIBLE SELF-LIFE

Now before you begin to think, “Well, I am not like that; I am different,” let me read you one single verse from Jeremiah 17:9, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt, who can know it?” But in the Hebrew, we suddenly discover that the heart is Jacob. The word is *Aqob*, from which we get the name *Yaaqob*. Your heart is Jacob; you have within you the same problem. Maybe you have not yet had the circumstances to bring it out. Maybe you do not have the intelligence to exploit it, but it is all there. No wonder the Lord said in the pattern prayer, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

There is so much to say about Jacob. The first thing I want to underline is the impossible, seemingly incurable self-life of Jacob. Some people paint a picture of Jacob as if he were a gangster. Others paint a picture of a bloodless, anemic, spineless, interior decorator, a kind of effeminate man. All these are absolutely wrong. They are based on misunderstandings of the record. Jacob was an incredibly attractive man. His mother loved him, and so did Rachel from the moment he kissed her. But she had to wait seven years, and just to put the story right, so did Leah. What did they see in this anemic, spineless, bloodless man? It is very interesting that when Jacob ran away from home and came to the country where his uncle lived, he saw the shepherds, and he said to them, “Why aren’t you watering your flocks?” They said, “We have to wait until we are all here.” The stone over the well was so big that it needed more than one man to move it. But when Rachel appeared, Jacob single-handedly moved the stone! So much for this idea that he was some unattractive, spineless, weak, interior decorator!

The problem with Jacob was not that he deliberately did things that were wrong. The problem with Jacob was an irrepressible self-life. He could not help it. He had incredible business acumen. He could not see the possibility of profit without immediately clinching the matter. It is interesting; he could not see the possibility of making some money without going for it.

Jacob Twisted His Brother

When Jacob’s brother Esau, who was a big hunter and a lover of outdoor life, came in, he was famished. Jacob, who must have been a good cook, had made some lentil soup. And when Esau saw the lentil soup, he did not even inquire what it was. He just said,

“Let me have a swallow (that is what it says in Hebrew) of that soup.” And Jacob said, “Not until you sign on the dotted line. You give me your birthright and swear before God, and you can have as much of this soup as you want.” And for a mess of pottage, as the old version puts it, Esau despised his birthright.

Jacob Twisted His Father

If that was not bad enough, Jacob stole the blessing of his aged father, the blessing for the first-born. Rebecca was an extraordinary woman. I have to be careful what I say, but I must say it. Jewish women would rule the world if they could, and so would the Chinese. They share this common ancestry in my estimation. She was a remarkable woman. She had overheard Esau speaking with blind Isaac. “Listen,” she said to Jacob, “don’t argue. Do exactly what I say. Go and get two kids, goats, and I am going to make the kind of broth that your father loves.”

Jacob said, “Very good, but supposing he feels me?”

“Don’t worry,” Rebecca said, “I have already got a plan. I will take the softest part of the kid and make gloves for you, and put some on the back of your neck. I will dress you up in Esau’s clothes that he keeps here with me, and your father will not know.”

The worst thing of all was the price Jacob paid by lying to the blind, aged Isaac.

“Are you Esau?” he said.

“I am,” said Jacob.

“Funny,” he said, “it is the voice of Jacob and the smell of Esau.”

“Won’t a curse come on me?” Jacob had said to his mother before they did this.

“Don’t worry about it,” she said, “the curse will be on me.” And it was. She never saw her beloved son again. He fled for his life.

Jacob Twisted His God

Here is something amazing about this Jacob. He had a self-life that he could not discipline. It was so powerful and so energetic. But do you know that the Lord appeared to this man? Now wouldn’t you think this extraordinary? He had stolen the birthright, he had stolen the blessing of the firstborn, he had deceived his aged father, and then the Lord gave him one of the most extraordinary revelations in the Bible. It was a ladder going up from the earth to heaven. On it were angels going up and down, up and down, and to one side was the Lord. And Jacob understood it. He understood that this was the death of his self-life, which is more than many Christians understand. He understood, “This is none other than the house of God. This is a fearful place!” Spontaneously, his self-life knew: this is the end.

So incurable was that self-life of Jacob, you would have thought he would have been flat on his face before God. Not Jacob! He never said, “I am running away because I have done something wrong.” He said, “This is wonderful, Lord. Now listen; if You will look after me, feed me, clothe me, take full responsibility for me, and bring me back here to this very spot, this stone that I have set up will be the house of God. I will build You a house right on this spot.” He bargained with the Lord.

It is incredible! If anything could give us a picture of this man, here it is. He was not undone by this incredible vision of the house of God, this communication between heaven and earth, and earth and heaven. We call this relationship with the Lord the body of our Lord Jesus. The Head is in heaven, and we are on earth. We are joined together in

heavenly communication and ministry, and much else. You would have thought this would have undone Jacob. Not at all! He said, "Dear Lord, if you do this for me, I will give you a tenth of everything." Isn't that amazing! You would have thought the Lord would have said, "I have had enough. This is just about it." One would have thought the power of God would have struck him dead. The love of God is so amazing.

Jacob Twisted His Uncle

Jacob was a bargainer. As soon as he got to his Uncle Laban's he started bargaining, and interestingly, it was over Rachel. Can you believe it? It is not normal to bargain over someone you love very greatly and want to marry, but Jacob bargained seven years for her as his wages. "That is all, seven years," he bargained.

Later on, he bargained over the sheep and the goats. He said to his uncle, "Look, I will continue to work for you. I will just have all of the spotted and streaked goats and sheep." Uncle Laban thought that was a pretty good bargain, and he said, "All right; seek them out and take them." And then Jacob took poplar rods, stripped them, and put them in front of the ewes when they mated. And lo and behold, the flocks brought forth streaked and speckled sheep and goats. Zoologists and scientists have wrestled with this. What was it that Jacob did? There is a very interesting small article about this in the Encyclopedia Judeaica. Scientists in Israel have discovered that Jacob actually was onto something. But it worked! And before long, Jacob had enormous flocks and Laban had smaller and smaller ones. It does not matter where you turn, this man was incurable.

PREDESTINED ARRANGEMENTS

These were all divinely predestined arrangements. You know, the Lord never kept Jacob on a short lead. You have those leads that you use to bow dogs. They can go a long way and then you can pull them back. All these arrangements and relationships were predestined by God; every one of them. Actually, the Lord meant to give Jacob the birthright. He meant him to have the blessing. It was Jacob's flesh, his self-life that made all the problem. He could not leave it to God; he had to do it himself. The Lord said, "That is all right; you do it yourself and you will suffer the consequences." And then the Lord made all the arrangements.

Jacob Sees Himself in Laban

The other biggest twister in the Middle East was Laban. So the Lord just simply arranged everything. Jacob fell into the arms of the other biggest twister in the Middle East, and those two twisted each other for twenty-one years in every single way. Jacob was totally unaware of himself. "Your father," he said to Rachel, "has changed my wages ten times." It was all Laban's fault. He never thought there was anything wrong with him.

But the worst thing was working seven years for Rachel. And the Book says that it was just as if it was only a few days because of the love Jacob had for her. Then came the big Jewish wedding. It was a big affair with dimmed lights and lots of wine. Everybody was there. And poor Jacob; he woke up the next morning to find it was Leah! Now he was enraged: "How could you do this to me? My uncle! My mother's brother! A near

relative! You twisted me! For seven years I have worked for Rachel, and now I have ended up with Leah.”

But Laban was not the least bit outdone. He simply said, “That is all right. Let’s have one week for the wedding celebrations. Next week we will have Rachel’s wedding, and you can work for another seven years.” Isn’t that amazing!

When God is going to change us and transform us into the image of His beloved Son, He arranges our circumstances and our relationships. It is a “Laban-Jacob” and a “Jacob-Laban” relationship. Now you begin to see yourself. Never once did it enter Jacob’s head, “I deceived my twin brother; I took advantage of him. I cheated him. I lied to my aged father and deceived him.” Never once did this enter into Jacob’s mind, until at the end of twenty-one years he had begun to see himself in Laban.

Jacob Sees Himself in Leah

He also saw himself in Leah—sweet, sweet Leah. She was obviously as twisted as Jacob. Laban must have said to her, “My girl, you keep your big mouth shut. We will veil you right down to the pulpit. Walk like your sister. Do not open your mouth, and the deed will be done.” She was in it; she was part of it. Mother probably said to her, “Dear, if you do not do this, you are going to be left on the shelf.”

Jacob Sees Himself in Rachel

Jacob began to wake up. He never thought an evil thought ever entered the mind of Rachel. But when he fled, Uncle Laban followed with a posse of men. He was enraged: “What have you done? You slipped out of the home and did not let me see my daughters or my grandchildren. And you stole the household gods.”

Then Jacob said, “Don’t be ridiculous; I would not touch your household gods. Search everything.” Now these household idols were actually title deeds to property.

And Uncle Laban, who knew his nephew, said, “Yes, I will.” And he searched everywhere. The Hebrew says, “He touched everything.” You have to be Jewish to understand that he touched everything. He did not just sort of look around, but he went everywhere, feeling everything. When he came to Rachel, she said, “Papa, do not touch me. I am not feeling so good.” She was sitting on the camel saddle which was quite big, and underneath the saddle were all the household gods. So she was as much a twister as both her father and her husband.

Now for the first time in his life, Jacob knew himself. He saw himself in Laban, he saw himself in Leah, and he saw himself in his beloved Rachel. Then he was sick. He was sick of himself. Then it came home to him what he had done to his twin brother, to his aged father, and to his uncle Laban.

A MAN WRESTLED WITH JACOB

The whole focal point of God’s dealings with Jacob was centered on one little spot, called *Jabbok*. It is interesting that in the Hebrew, *Jabbok* means “crossing a wadi, a seasonal river.” *Yaaqob* means “Jacob,” and *Yabboq* means “wrestling.” This is no coincidence; it is all within the Book.

“And Jacob was left alone.” This is an “aloneness” that every child of God has to come to. Your wife cannot help you, your husband cannot help you, your parents nor

your children can help you, your friends cannot help you. Even those who have meant the most to you spiritually cannot help you. You have to be alone. You have Laban behind you and Esau in front of you, and no one with you. And now you know yourself. Every child of God must sooner or later come to their *Jabbok*. It is a divine appointment.

It is amazing what happened to Jacob! “And a Man wrestled with Jacob” Who was this Man? In Hosea 12:3-5, He is called “the Angel of the Lord.” And when we have that term, it is normally the Lord Jesus. Who was this man who provoked Jacob, who wrestled with him? And Jacob wrestled with this Man all night. And this Man said, “Let Me go.” But Jacob said, “I will not let You go until You bless me.”

The blessing was not this: “Bless you, bless you,” some cheap little thing. This was transformation. “I will not let You go until You bless me.” The Lord touched his thigh. Who was this man? It was the Lord Jesus.

Here you have an enactment of Calvary. Who made Himself so weak that he could be nailed to a cross in order to transform you, in order to change you into His likeness? It was the Lord Jesus. In whose face did the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shine? It was Jesus. Where did it shine stronger? On Calvary.

We have it in II Corinthians 4:6: “Seeing it is God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” That heavenly Man, the Messiah Jesus, made Himself weak so that Jacob could prevail, so that He could change him from Jacob into Israel. Why do you think God calls Himself “the Mighty One of Jacob” (Psalm 46)? But Jacob prevailed against Him. Only someone as powerful as God could allow Himself to become weak that He might save and transform.

“What is your name?” said the Lord. “Jacob,” said Jacob. He could have said, “I am Abraham’s grandson; I am Isaac’s son.” But he said, “My name is *Twister*,” He was facing stark reality. Then the Lord said, “You shall no more be called *Twister*; you shall be called *Israel*.” This extraordinary name *Israel* deliberately has a number of possible meanings: “God prevails!” “God moves!” “God persists!” Another way of looking at it: “Jacob prevailed with God.” It is a kind of pun: “Prince *with* God; Prince *of* God.” The Hebrew is *Sar-El*. Isn’t this amazing?

Jacob was never the same after that meeting with God: “I have seen the face of God and I have lived.” For the rest of his life he limped. And God trusted him. He had to bear with his sons and their deceit. He saw Jacob in them. It is an amazing story. The old manipulator was broken, and a prince with God was born, a man who had power with God. Jacob never felt the need of anything; he had it all within his self-life. Then, for the rest of his life, he had to use a staff. He was a changed man. He had been a bargainer; now he was a giver. He had been an acquirer; now he was someone who always gave—a worshiper.

A WORSHIPER

The last picture we have of Jacob is when he was dying, and by faith he blessed the sons of Joseph and worshiped, leaning on his staff. A bargainer can never be a worshiper. An acquirer is always acquiring; he is hardly ever a giver. And one who steals blessings is never a channel of blessing. But then, the incredible thing happened; Jacob was so broken of his self-life that it had to be by faith that he blessed and by faith that he

worshiped. God had done such a work in this human being that the last picture we have of him is as a channel of blessing—a worshipper.

When he went down into Egypt, Pharaoh wanted to meet him. Pharaoh was the greatest potentate of the super power of that day. And when he met him, he intuitively knew he had met someone far greater than himself. He asked Jacob, the twister, the bargainer, the acquirer, the stealer of the blessing, to bless him. It is an amazing picture of the aged Jacob placing his hands upon Pharaoh and blessing him. The effect was so great that when Jacob died, they gave him a state funeral.

Dear brother, dear sister, what does it mean to be conformed to the image of God's Son? It means "the glory of God." It is as simple as that. Jacob was dust, and you would have said, "He is rubbish; not the material for the kingdom of heaven." But he ended in glory. It reminds me of the words of the apostle Peter, "The God of all grace who called you unto His eternal glory in the Messiah Jesus" (1 Pet. 5:10).

THE DESIRE FOR GOD

Who is boss in your life? The Lord Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." From one point of view, Jacob was anything but pure in heart. Yet the difference between him and Esau was this: deeper than his self-life, deeper than all of his business acumen, deeper than his profit mentality, deeper than the energy that was in him, the natural power of his flesh, was a desire for God. That is why he wanted the birthright. He saw it as something eternal. That is why he wanted the blessing. He saw it as something eternal. Here, then dear child of God, is a cause of tremendous comfort to us. God loves you and He has predestined you to be conformed to the image of His Son. The key is the Lordship of the Lord Jesus. Is He Lord? If He is, He will transform you. He will change you into His likeness. He will use every circumstance, however dark, every single problem, every tribulation, every relationship to change you into His likeness. Praise the Lord!

Beloved Lord, we are all Jacobs. Some of us may not see ourselves in that way, but you see us, all of us, as Jacobs. Lord, You have said, "Jacob I have loved." Take hold of us, Lord. Bring us to the place where we are prepared for You to be Lord. Bring us to the place, whatever it costs, where we are alone, where we have no hope but You. Bring us to the place where the light of the knowledge of the glory of Your glory in the face of our Lord Jesus shines into us. Do it Lord for Your glory. We ask it in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen