

GRACE BIBLE CHURCH
Robert R. McLaughlin Bible Ministries

The Tree of Life is a weekly teaching summary.

The Tree of Life for week ending 08/25/02.

Your Own Place, Your Personal Sense of Destiny, and Your Own Country. Part 4
We all need to have the experience of going through struggles in life alone with God.

In our study of the Israeli-Arab conflict, we are noting that in spite of Jacob's failures, God says throughout the Bible, *"I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."* Even after the encouragement he received from a visit from the Lord's angels in **Gen 32:1-2**, Jacob is still living in fear of his brother Esau's revenge.

Gen 32:3-6 *Then Jacob sent messengers before him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom. He also commanded them saying, "Thus you shall say to my lord Esau: 'Thus says your servant Jacob, "I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed until now [Jacob is still relying on human viewpoint and human cleverness—he is returning to the promised land, and all he remembers is the last time he saw Esau 20 years ago, when Esau threatened to murder him]; and I have oxen and donkeys and flocks and male and female servants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in your sight."'"* And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, *"We came to your brother Esau, and furthermore he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him."*

The real problem here is not that Esau is coming with 400 men; the real problem is that Jacob's mind is racing in many different directions and he is filled with fear, **Gen 32:7**, *"Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed."* Every time fear comes into your life, you know you are not living the Christian way of life, **1Jo 4:18**, *"Fear does not exist in virtue-love, but virtue-love drives out fear; for fear causes punishment. In fact, the person who is afraid has not been matured by virtue-love."* If you have personal love for God the Father and you know Him, you understand His integrity, you rest on the entire essence, integrity, and person of God. You will not even need to claim promises, for now you will know the One who makes the promises.

Knowing that God loves you is a process that comes from perception of doctrine; the more you learn, the more you will realize how much God loves you. However, Jacob has not been learning doctrine on a consistent basis. We do not start by loving God; God starts by loving us. We did not find God; He found us. God's love for us is based on who God is, not who we are. God loved us before the foundation of the world, **Act 2:23**, *"This Man [Jesus Christ], was delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God."* His love for us was not based upon anything we accomplished, **Eph 1:3-4**, *"Worthy of praise and glorification be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He elected us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him."* God loved us billions of years ago and not only elected us to be His children, but also blessed us beyond our imagination. God loves all believers; He knew in eternity past who the winners and losers would be, and He still blessed even the

worst of believers. Both winners and losers have an eternal escrow savings account, equal privilege and equal opportunity, and **the perfect righteousness of God** given to them at the moment of salvation, and God's loves His righteousness, **Psa 11:7, 33:5**. God blesses us, keeps us alive, and gives us all a measure of prosperity, from His love to His righteousness in us. As believers we possess His righteousness, and therefore His justice is free to love us **forever** with an impersonal, unconditional love, **Rom 8:38-39**. This sets the believer free from guilt, worry, condemnation, and self-introspection.

These weaknesses of Jacob are pointed out to us by God the Holy Spirit so that we will be encouraged to keep going, in spite of our own shortcomings. Fear ranges from uneasiness to a total insecurity in life. Certainly there are always going to be future disasters just as there have been past historical disasters, but the believer with doctrine is a survivor. If you have no confidence in God, you, like Jacob, will have constant fears tormenting you.

We may need to ask ourselves the questions, "Do I entertain fear in my life?"... "Am I frightened by what the future holds?" Fear is used very effectively by Satan to confuse and blind the human race. In the Christian life, there is no reason for ever being frightened. Fear is a mental attitude sin, **1Sa 17:24-26, Rom 14:23**, "*Whatever is not from faith is sin.*" Fear is a sign of backsliding, or going "absent without leave" in the Christian life, **1Sa 18:12,29, 21:12**. Fear can result in sickness and depression, **Gen 21:17**, and even suicide, **1Ki 19:4**.

Causes of fear in the Bible are as follows:

- Rejection of Bible doctrine, **Psa 53:5**, "*The fool rejects doctrine and is in great fear where there is no fear.*"
- Worrying about the details of life, **Mat 10:29-31**, "*Therefore do not fear; you are of more value than many sparrows.*"
- Breakdown in the mentality of the soul over the pressures of life, **Luk 21:26**, "*Men will be fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.*"
- Fear of what others might say or do, especially when witnessing for Christ, **Joh 7:13**.
- Fear of death. Satan uses this fear to keep people in bondage their entire lives, **Heb 2:15**.
- Fear of rejection. In **Gal 2:12**, Peter feared being rejected by the Jews so he separated from his Gentile brethren.
- Fear of old age. In **Ecc 12:1-8**, fears and phobias haunt the elderly because they have reached old age without memory of their Creator.
- Fearing the "floods," or antagonism, of ungodly men, **Psa 18:4**.

Fear is not part of God's plan, **Deu 31:8, Isa 41:10, 2Ti 1:7**, "*For God has not given us a lifestyle of fear, but of power and love and of sound judgment.*" Fear then, is total disorientation to the plan of God and destroys any personal sense of destiny. The absence of fear is a part of the relaxed mental attitude that believers with doctrine enjoy. We see this in Moses, **Heb 11:27**, "*By means of doctrine resident in the soul, Moses left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen.*" Moses knew the principle of **Heb 13:6**, "*The Lord is my helper and I will not fear what man may do to me.*" Therefore, courage, the absence of fear, is a sign of spiritual growth, **Psa 56:3-4**. Promise after promise, line upon line, precept upon precept, in God's Word are designed to give the believer confidence toward God, and therefore freedom from fear.

On the other hand, fear can also drive us to the Lord. In **Gen 32:9-12**, fear of Esau drove Jacob to humble himself and seek God. In **Luk 8:50**, fear of his child dying drove a man to seek the Lord. In **Mat 8:26**, fear drove the disciples to run to the Lord and wake Him up. As **Psa 34:4** says, *“I sought the Lord, and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears.”*

Fear is such a serious sin because it is a lack of trust and respect toward God. We see this fear in Jacob in **Gen 32:7-8**, *“Then Jacob was extremely frightened and filled with mental anguish [and in this state of mind, he resorts to a desperate, foolish, human plan]; and he divided the people who were with him, and the flocks and the herds and the camels, into two companies; for he said, ‘If Esau comes to the one company and attacks it, then the company which is left will escape.’”* By this time, Esau has no intentions of seeking revenge; it is merely the *imagination* of Jacob’s evil heart. In **Gen 32:9-13**, *“And Jacob said, ‘O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O Lord, who didst say to me, “Return to your country and to your relatives, and I will prosper you,” I am unworthy of all the lovingkindness and of all the faithfulness which Thou hast shown to Thy servant; for with my staff only I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two companies. Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me, the mothers with the children. For Thou didst say, “I will surely prosper you, and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.”’ So he spent the night there. Then he selected from what he had with him a present for his brother Esau.”* First he prays to the Lord to deliver him, then he gets right back up from his prayer and falls back on human solutions. **Gen 32:14-20** continues, *“...Two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty milking camels and their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. And he delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants, ‘Pass on before me, and put a space between droves.’ And he commanded the one in front, saying, ‘When my brother Esau meets you and asks you, saying, “To whom do you belong, and where are you going, and to whom do these animals in front of you belong?” then you shall say, “These belong to your servant Jacob; it is a present sent to my lord Esau. And behold, he also is behind us.”’ Then he commanded also the second and the third, and all those who followed the droves, saying, ‘After this manner you shall speak to Esau when you find him; and you shall say, “Behold, your servant Jacob also is behind us.”’ For he said, ‘I will appease him with the present that goes before me. Then afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me.’”*

Jacob is operating as a coward, afraid of what a man can do to him. Many of us take our problems and needs to the Lord in prayer. We ask Him for help and then we turn around and come up with human viewpoint solutions. We finish praying and then throw the burden right back on our own back. The real problem is that we do not completely believe Him and trust Him as we should. Instead of entrusting the reconciliation of himself and his brother to the Lord, Jacob took it upon himself to appease Esau.

- In verses 3-8, he devises a plan to appease Esau. He sends lavish presents to Esau in an attempt to secure his good will.
- In verse 9-12, he goes to God in prayer and asks for the Lord to help him.
- In verses 13-20, he develops another plan and totally ignores his own prayer.

Jacob arranged his families, his possessions, and his fighting men to the best possible advantage, prepared to put up a good fight or flee if it became necessary. While Jacob is a believer and back in the will of God, he is still reversionistic in his thinking.

1. Any solution you have to your problems apart from doctrine is a manifestation of both arrogance and irrationality.
2. Divine solutions are the only solutions, and human solutions are no solutions. Human solutions may hold off the problem temporarily, but they will not solve the problem permanently.
3. Fear sees the problem; a personal sense of destiny sees the solution.
4. Since problem solving is a major function of the spiritual life of the Church, all divine solutions come from the problem-solving devices in the believer's own soul.
5. As believers we were designed to be spiritually independent of human solutions in life.

In **Gen 32:22**, Jacob has turned from faith to unbelief, from prayer to scheming, from God to his own fleshly devices. Remember that he has just run from his uncle Laban, and he is on his way to the promised land, and now he is fearing his brother Esau.

Before he even saw Esau, Jacob met someone else he could not handle. Because he was a liar, cheat, and deceiver who was constantly at odds with other men, he had developed a strong physical body. He loved to wrestle because it involved being clever and tricking the opponent. On his way to meet Esau, he stopped at a place called Jabbok, and there he was challenged to a wrestling match. In this match he was not only beaten up badly, but he ended up with a limp for the rest of his life. However, even though he lost, this wrestling match did great things for Jacob as a believer. Since he was such a great wrestler, he assumed that there was no one else better, and he had some pride that needed to be removed. For the first time in the book of Genesis, Jacob was unable to defeat an opponent. Jacob learned the hard way that the Lord Jesus Christ could always out-wrestle him. His opponent was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, and He gave Jacob a body-slam that made him limp for life. It was not a man that fought with Jacob, nor was it an angel; it was our Lord Himself. For the first time in Jacob's life, he could neither think nor fight his way out of a jam. His real battle is with God, not with Esau. He must make things right with God before he can face Esau and make things right with him.

Jacob's story continues in **Gen 32:22-24**, "*Now he arose that same night and took his two wives and his two concubines and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. And he took them and sent them across the stream. And he sent across whatever he had. **Then Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak.***" It is not until Jacob is *left alone* with the Lord that his name is changed to *Israel*, a "prince with God." In fact, we all need to have that experience of going through struggles in life alone with God. It is a part of becoming spiritually self-sustained. To be left alone with God is the only true way of arriving at an accurate knowledge of ourselves and our ways. No matter what we may think about ourselves, or what others may think about us, the real question is, "What does God think about us?" The answer to this question can only be learned when we are left alone with Him. Jacob had arranged everything for meeting and pleasing his brother Esau, however, the Lord is going to intervene and reveal some very serious problems that Jacob has. To learn these lessons, Jacob must be humbled; He must be stripped of his own strength, and even given a permanent limp.

Many teach that Jacob was the initiator of this wrestling match, however, Jacob had no desire to wrestle anybody; Uncle Laban is in back of him, and his brother Esau is ahead of him. He is caught now between a rock and a hard place, and he does not know which way to turn. The attack begins with this mysterious antagonist starting the fight with Jacob.

1. Jacob needed to have his “human strength” beaten out of him.
2. Jacob has been relying on human strength, power, viewpoint, and gimmicks to try to obtain blessings in life and solve his problems.
3. Jacob needed to be made conscious of his *standing* with God so that he would stop conniving, plotting, and scheming.
4. God initiates this wrestling match, which ends in the defeat of the old Jacob.

It is God who will “touch the socket of his hip” and Jacob’s hip will be dislocated as he wrestles. It is God who breaks the stubborn, willful, self-reliant Jacob and brings him to his senses. Let us establish who exactly this was who wrestled with Jacob, **Hos 12:2-5**, “*The Lord also has a dispute with Judah, and will punish Jacob [a title for the nation of Israel in apostasy] according to his ways; He will repay him according to his deeds. In the womb he took his brother by the heel, and in his maturity he contended with God. Yes, he wrestled with the angel and prevailed; He wept and sought **His favor** [the Lord’s favor]. He found Him [the Lord Jesus Christ] at Bethel, and there He spoke with us, **even the Lord, the God of hosts; the Lord [Jehovah] is His name.**” First, a man wrestles with Jacob and does not prevail. Secondly, Jacob struggles with the man and does prevail. It was none other than Jehovah, the pre-incarnate Christ, who wrestled with Jacob that night. Jehovah, the God of Israel, is dealing directly and personally with Jacob to change his life and to give him a new name. A new name is what God desires to give to all of us. He **wills** his highest and best for every believer; unfortunately, not every believer receives the highest and best.*

For a more detailed study, order last week’s tapes, IA11-198 to IA11-201.