**SERMON OUTLINE**

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| **SERMON TITLE:** | Learning to Lean |
| **SERMON REFERENCE:** | Hebrews 11:21; Genesis 32 |
| **LWF SERMON NUMBER:** | #2396 |
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1. INTRODUCTION
   1. Many think that self-sufficiency is a virtue. But spiritually, it is a vice.
   2. Hebrews 11:21
   3. Jacob was a conniver, a con artist. But God was working on Jacob to make him what He wanted him to be.
   4. God is working on each of us and will not be finished with us until our complete and total dependency is not on self, but on Him.
      1. Many of us are like the old cowboy who said, “I ain’t what I used to be, and I ain’t what I ought to be, but I thank God for what I’m going to be.”
         1. We are going to be something in the Lord Jesus Christ.
            1. Philippians 1:6
   5. God wants to help you grow spiritually and to deliver you from self-sufficiency, just as He did with Jacob.
   6. A reminder of Jacob’s backstory (leading up to our story in Genesis 32):
      1. Jacob couldn’t trust God for what God had promised, so he deceived his father to gain the birthright that God already wanted to give him.
      2. Jacob tricked his brother into giving him the birthright when it was actually already his. Esau traded what he thought was the birthright for a bowl of stew.
      3. Jacob had to flee because Esau wanted to kill him, and he kept running for 20 years.
      4. God had spoken to Jacob and many wonderful things had happened to him during those years in the wilderness, but he could not be truly right with God until he was right with Esau, the brother he had cheated.
      5. Jacob hears that Esau is coming to meet him, and this is the situation God is going to use to cause Jacob to grow and to cease depending upon himself.
   7. God had a purpose in saying that Jacob worshipped leaning upon his staff, and we can look at three principles from what happened in Jacob’s life to discover how this relates to our lives.
2. god will protect you, but he will not pamper you (Genesis 32:1)
   1. As Jacob is fleeing, he suddenly sees angels and realizes that he has had an angel escort all these years as he’s been out in the wilderness and various places.
      1. The angels of God had been encamping around him to protect him, even though he’s not totally right with God.
      2. Jacob was immature, out of fellowship with God, and yet God was protecting him.
      3. Thank God for the angels that encamp around about us and protect us when we don’t deserve it.
         1. The Bible teaches that angels are ministering spirits.
         2. We all have angels watching over us.
   2. Even though God was protecting Jacob, God did not pamper him. God let him go through great need and want and difficulty.
      1. Esau is coming with blood in his eye and an army of 400 strong men.
         1. God could have kept Esau from coming against Jacob; instead, He engineered it. God was bringing trouble to this man.
      2. Jacob’s father-in-law, Laban wanted to know, how do I deal with Jacob?
         1. God came to Laban in a dream and told him, “Don’t hurt him and don’t help him. Just let him go.”
            1. Genesis 31: 24
      3. God will let you have your way until you come to the end of yourself.
      4. Here is a man out of fellowship with God, a man in danger, and God is protecting him with angels, but God is not removing him from difficulty.
   3. When Jacob learns that Esau is coming with 400 men, his mind begins to work. He begins to scheme.
      1. You can see his self-sufficiency as he tries to use his skills to help the situation.
         1. He tries flattery
            1. Genesis 32:3-5
            2. Jacob seems to be flattering Esau, calling him “my lord” and angling for grace and mercy.
         2. He tries strategy
            1. Genesis 32:6-8
            2. He’s trying to cut his losses, dividing things up, thinking: “If Esau gets this group, then this group will be spared.” He’s working hard to arrange things.
         3. He tries prayer
            1. Genesis 32:9
            2. Jacob was quoting God’s promises back to Him, reminding God how He said He was going to bless and protect him.
            3. He was saying, “O God, take care of me. I’m in trouble.”
            4. It wasn’t wrong for Jacob to pray. He should have prayed. But prayer was not his first thought. Prayer was his last resort.
         4. Then he goes back to public relations.
            1. Genesis 32:13-21
            2. He starts sending gifts a few at time, trying to appease his brother.
            3. It is as if he’s saying, “Lord, I trust You, but I don’t trust You completely. You help me out, Lord; but, I’ve also got to rig this thing.”
      2. Genesis 32:20
      3. Appeasement, strategy, flattery: Jacob’s mind is spinning with all of his scheming.
   4. God lets him stew in his own juices, striving and strategizing.
   5. The angels are there to protect him, but not to rescue him from the situation.
   6. God will do the same for you—protect you, but not pamper you.
3. god will hurt you, but he will not harm you
   1. In this passage of Scripture, Jacob has done all of this preparation by his own scheming, and he is finally alone.
      1. Genesis 32:24
   2. God engineered that Jacob was left alone.
      1. The flesh doesn’t want to be left alone.
      2. We have a generation of people who cannot stand solitude, to be alone with God.
         1. We always need noise and distractions around us because we cannot look God in the face and we cannot look ourselves in the face.
      3. All of us need solitude, to be left alone, to reflect, to really think.
   3. When Jacob is alone he has a confrontation with God Himself.
      1. Genesis 32:24
      2. He’s alone in the dark and someone jumps on him, and he finds himself in a wrestling match with the pre-incarnate Christ.
         1. Jesus Christ came to wrestle with Jacob.
            1. This was before Jesus was born of a virgin.
            2. The “angel” is a theophany, a pre-incarnate appearance of our Lord.
            3. Jacob was wrestling with the angel, but that’s not the point: The angel started the fight. The angel is wrestling with Jacob.
   4. God is trying to do something with Jacob to deliver him from his self-sufficiency. And so the Lord gets him in a wrestling match and they wrestle, all night long, back and forth, a mortal man with Almighty God.
   5. As the day is about to break, the angel makes a very significant move and cripples Jacob.
      1. Genesis 32:25
      2. In all their wrestling, don’t you think that the angel could have thrown Jacob any time He wanted to?
      3. Finally, it’s as if the Lord says, “I hate to do this to you, Jake,” but He reaches under the hollow of his thigh and shrivels it up, and Jacob can’t wrestle anymore.
         1. The thigh muscle is one of the most important to a wrestler. That’s where his strength is. If you take away his leg, he can’t wrestle.
   6. And so, the Angel of the Lord cripples Jacob, and says, “Let Me go.” Jacob says, “I’m not letting You go, not until You bless me.”
      1. Why did the Lord say, “Let Me go?” Because the Lord didn’t want him to let go.
         1. Study the Bible and you’ll find instances when God will act as if He wants to get away from us when He really wants us to pursue Him with all of our heart:
            1. On the Road to Emmaus when Jesus was walking with two disciples after His resurrection and Jesus made as if He would go further on instead of staying with them.

Luke 24:13-35

* + - * 1. Syrophoenician woman who had a demon-possessed daughter and Jesus acted as if He would not heal her daughter because they were Gentiles

Luke 24:13-35

* + 1. Throughout the Bible God sometimes acts like He wants us to let Him alone. But He wants us to pursue Him with all of our heart.
    2. Jacob has even lost his secret weapon: his ability to run away. He realizes he has no hope except God and so he refuses to let go.
  1. By allowing Jacob to be hurt but not harmed, God has brought him to the place where he realizes that his only hope is God.
     1. Not his scheming, but his surrendering; not his bargaining, but his begging.
  2. Maybe you don’t like that idea of God hurting you, but God loves you too much to leave you self-sufficient.
     1. A parent may hurt their child with needed discipline
     2. A doctor may hurt you with surgery necessary for your good.
     3. So, while God protects you, never taking His eye off of you, He will not pamper or coddle you; He will allow hurt to come to you.
        1. Hebrews 12:6
     4. But God will not harm you; you can trust Him.
        1. Hebrews 12:11

1. god will break you, but he desires to bless you
   1. This wrestling match was about God getting Jacob to a place of brokenness so He could transform him into the prince he was meant to be.
      1. Genesis 32:27-31
         1. “Jacob” means “supplanter; conniver.” In modern English, the very name means con artist.
            1. The name Jacob has been transformed. It’s now an honorable name, because of what God has done.
         2. “Israel” means “prince.” God tells Jacob, “You used to be named con artist, but now your name is prince because you have power with God and with men because you prevailed.”
         3. Jacob asked for the angel’s name but the Lord refused saying, “You know My name,” and He blessed him.
         4. Jacob called the place “Peniel” which means “Face of God.”
   2. God has broken Jacob because He wants to bless him.
      1. The Lord asked him to state his name—not because He didn’t know it, but because He wanted Jacob to admit what he was: con artist, conniver, schemer.
         1. God is going to ask you the same thing, and you’ll have to say whatever it is that you are: lazy, lustful, doubter, liar, selfish or whatever it is.
   3. Jacob is crippled that he might be crowned. He is broken that he might be blessed. He goes from a name of shame to the Hall of Fame.
   4. Jacob’s encounter with God left him with a limp. He relied on a staff the rest of his life, and when it came time to die, he was still leaning on the Lord and worshipping Him.
      1. Hebrews 11:21
   5. God desires to break you that He might bless you.
      1. Men throw broken things away, but God never really uses anything or anyone until they’re first broken.
         1. Psalm 51:17
         2. Most of us are not being used of God because we’ve never been broken.
         3. God took a little lad’s lunch, broke it and fed the multitudes.
         4. Mary broke an alabaster box of ointment and lavished her love upon the Lord Jesus.
         5. The prophet Jeremiah said to break up fallow ground.
            1. Jeremiah 4:3
         6. Jesus, at the last supper, spoke of His body being broken.
            1. 1 Corinthians 11:24
      2. There’s a sense in which you won’t have to be broken, if you will break yourself.
         1. 1 Corinthians 11:31
         2. If we will come to our Lord in absolute humility and brokenness, cease our self-sufficiency, and stand on the Word of God, then God can use us as never before.
   6. Hebrews 11: 21
      1. Jacob was stronger crippled and leaning upon a staff than he ever would have been standing upon his own two feet.
2. CONCLUSION
   1. Failure doesn’t need to be final.
      1. Jacob was a man who was a failure, but God took Jacob and used him.
      2. If you’ve been a Jacob, running from God, conniving, self-sufficient, there is hope for you.
   2. If you’re wise, you’ll save yourself a wrestling match and make a full surrender now.
      1. If you’ll judge yourself, you won’t have to be judged.
   3. If there’s suffering in your life, let it teach you to lean on the Lord Jesus Christ.
   4. When it is all done and settled, it’s your worship by faith that really matters.
      1. With all the episodes in Jacob’s life, God sums it up in a sentence, “When he died, he worshipped leaning upon his staff.”
      2. Jacob was 147 years old when he died. He was weak and weary, but he spent his last moments worshipping the Lord.
   5. If you’ve been taught all of your life to be self-sufficient, God loves you too much to let you stay that way.
   6. These truths only apply to you if you know God and have a relationship with Him.
   7. Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today by asking Him to come into your life.
   8. Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
      1. Romans 3:23
      2. Romans 10:9-10
      3. Romans 10:13
      4. Acts 16:31
      5. John 3:16