

We have been looking at a powerful scene in the life of Jacob—a man who spent much of his life running, wrestling, and scheming, but who has finally come to a place of surrender. In Genesis chapter 33, we see the beautiful fruit of what happens when God changes a man's heart.

The Strategy of Humility

As we open the chapter, we see Jacob lifting his eyes and seeing Esau approaching with four hundred men. Now, remember, the last time these two were together, Esau was breathing out slaughter, vowing to kill his brother for stealing the birthright and the blessing.

Jacob arranges his family, putting the handmaids and their children first, then Leah and her children, and finally his beloved Rachel and Joseph in the rear. But notice verse 3: "And he passed over before them, and he bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near his brother."

In the ancient world, bowing seven times was the protocol for approaching a king. Jacob isn't trying to pull a fast one anymore. He isn't trying to "get over" on his brother. He is showing genuine, deep-seated humility. He is honoring the position Esau has attained as the leader of Edom. When we walk with the Lord, He strips away our pride and replaces it with a heart that is willing to serve and honor others.

A Divine Work of Reconciliation

What happens next is nothing short of a miracle. Verse 4 tells us: "But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept."

This is the hand of God. Jacob had prayed for deliverance, and God answered—not by destroying Esau, but by softening him. I believe Esau may have started that journey with a heart full of old grudges, much like Laban did when he pursued Jacob. But God has a way of getting hold of a man's heart. By the time they met, the bitterness had evaporated.

Note: We often worry about the "four hundred men" coming against us, but we forget that God is the Master of the human heart. When we commit our ways to Him, He can turn an enemy into a brother.

Graciousness and Contentment

When Esau asks about the family and the great company of livestock Jacob sent ahead, Jacob's response is beautiful. He calls his children "The children whom God has graciously given your servant" (Genesis 33:5). He doesn't take credit for his wealth or his family; he points directly to the grace of God.

There is a lovely exchange in verses 9 through 11. Esau says, "I have enough, my brother." And Jacob responds, "I have enough." This is a rare thing in our world—two men who are truly content. Jacob insists that Esau take the gift, not as a bribe, but as a "blessing." He says that seeing Esau's face was like seeing the face of God because he saw favor and forgiveness where he expected judgment.

Moving Forward in Peace

Eventually, the two brothers part ways. Esau returns to Seir, and Jacob journeys to Succoth and then to Shechem. We see Jacob's shepherd heart in how he refuses to overdrive the livestock and the children. He knows their limitations. Our Lord is the same way with us; He leads us gently, as we are able to bear it.

When Jacob arrives at Shechem, verse 18 tells us he came in peace. He buys a piece of land, signifying he is no longer a fugitive but a dweller in the land of promise. And what is the first thing he does? "He erected an altar there and called it El Elohe Israel" (Genesis 33:20).

This is significant! He doesn't call it "The God of my Fathers" or "The God of Jacob." He calls it "God, the God of Israel." He is finally identifying himself by the name God gave him—the name of a prince who has power with God. He is claiming a personal, vibrant relationship with the Lord.

Practical Application & Challenge

1. The Power of Forgiveness: Is there a "mounting grudge" in your life today? Jacob and Esau wasted twenty years in estrangement. Don't let bitterness rob you of another day. Take the first step in humility.
2. Contentment in Christ: Both brothers could say, "I have enough." Can you? We live in a world that constantly screams "More!" but peace is found in recognizing that everything we have is a gift graciously given by God.
3. Building Your Altar: Jacob settled in and immediately made worship his priority. As you go about your week, is there an "altar" (an attitude of worship) in your home? Are you making time to stop and acknowledge that He is your God?

An Invitation to New Life

Perhaps you are like Jacob was for many years—running, tired, and afraid of the consequences of your past. You've been trying to scheme your way through life, but your heart is restless.

I want you to know that there is a Brother who is better than Esau. Jesus Christ looked at us in our rebellion, and instead of coming to destroy us, He came to save us. He shed His precious blood on the cross to pay the debt for every wrong thing you've ever done. He took your judgment so you could receive His peace.

He didn't stay in the grave! The resurrection declares that He is truly God, Savior, and Lord. He is alive today, and He is reaching out to you. You don't have to bow seven times to earn His favor; you simply have to surrender your heart to Him.

Will you give your life to Him today? Simply pray, "Lord Jesus, I am a sinner in need of a Savior. Thank You for dying for me and rising again. I surrender my life to You. Wash me clean and lead me from this day forward."

If you made that decision today, the Bible says you are a brand-new creation. The old life, with all its heavy baggage and constant running, has passed away. A new life—the life of "Israel," the one who walks in the strength and grace of God—has just begun.