



The Sermon

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Genesis 32:22-32

"Wrestling with God"

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TRANSCRIPT

So, if you have your Bible, please take it and turn with me to Genesis 32, Genesis 32, and today we're going to look at verses 22 to 32. Genesis 32:22-32. And the title of this message is very obviously, "Wrestling with God." I want to begin, as we always do, by reading the text, then I will pray, and then we will look carefully at what God's Word says to us. And as I read this, just to remind us, this is God's inerrant and infallible Word.

Beginning in verse 22: "Now he" - referring to Jacob - "arose that same night and took his two wives and his two maids and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. He took them and sent them across the stream. And he sent across whatever he had.

"When Jacob was left alone, a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he touched the socket of his thigh; so the socket of Jacob's thigh was dislocated while he wrestled with him. Then he said, 'Let me go, for the dawn is breaking.' But he said, 'I will not let you go unless you bless me.' So he said to him, 'What is your name?' And he said, 'Jacob.' He said, 'Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed.' Then Jacob asked him and said, 'Please tell me your name.' But he said, 'Why is it that you ask my name?' And he blessed him there. So Jacob named the place Peniel, and he said, 'I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved.' Now the sun rose upon him just as he crossed over Peniel, and he was limping on his thigh. Therefore, to this day the sons of Israel do not eat the sinew of the hip which is on the socket of the thigh,

because he touched the socket of Jacob's thigh in the sinew of the hip." Let us go to the Lord in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, this is Your Word that has been read, and our prayer is that You would unleash the power that is in it to impact our lives. We pray that for each and every one of us Your Word would find penetration into our hearts and souls, and that we would be shaped and molded and conformed even more into the image of Jesus Christ. For any here today who are without Christ, we pray that today would be the day that they would enter into the kingdom. Lord, cause this passage, which is found in Your living Word, to come alive in our hearts. So Father, this is our prayer. May You alone be glorified, in Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

The title of this is "Wrestling with God," and in these verses we read about the life-changing encounter that Jacob had with God, and specifically with one who is God in human flesh, the second Person to the Trinity, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jacob is here wrestling with the preincarnate Jesus Christ.

What we learn from this is no one can meet Jesus Christ and their life not be dramatically changed. If your life has not been dramatically changed by Jesus Christ you can be assured that you've never met Jesus Christ, because Christ is too powerful, He's too full of grace and mercy for our lives to ever remain the same once we encounter Christ. When we meet Him, everything is changed top to bottom. We receive a new life, a new start, a new name, just as Jacob receives here, and no one will ever be the same after meeting Jesus Christ. Is that not your testimony today, how Christ has radically and dramatically changed your life from the inside out, from what you once were to what you are now becoming.

This is exactly what happened to Jacob in this text. He was alone. He was in the wilderness. It was at the middle of the night, he was scared, and then Jesus Christ suddenly appeared to him and laid hold of him, and Christ changed his life for the rest of his life. Old Jacob was given a new name, Israel, and that represented the radical transformation that was now beginning in Jacob's life. He was not slightly changed, he was significantly changed from the inside out. Has this happened to you? Can your life be divided into two volumes: your BC days (before Christ), and now your AD days now that you know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Have you encountered His grace? Have you met Him?

As we walk through this passage, Jacob really serves as a prototype for us, much like Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus Road of what it looks like, what it feels like to encounter Jesus Christ. And as we walk through this passage, several headings to set before you that will be like really footsteps to walk us through this text. I want you to note first, "Jacob trembling," that's in verses 22 and 23. And in verse 22 we read, "And he arose that same night."

"He" refers to Jacob, and he arose that night because he couldn't sleep that night. He woke up in the middle of the night, he was too afraid to sleep. There was a matter that was weighing heavily upon Jacob that night, and it was his twin brother Esau who was coming to him with four hundred men. You looked at that last week in the first part of this chapter. And Esau is coming, and Jacob assumes it's for revenge, because Jacob has connived his way to steal the blessing from his brother. And we've already read of how Esau wanted to take the life of Jacob, and his own mother had to tell him, "You've got to get out of town or your brother is going to kill you."

And so we read earlier in this chapter in verse 7 that Jacob was greatly afraid, not just afraid, greatly afraid and distressed, believing that Esau will attack him and take his very life. Jacob has sent out emissaries with gifts to try to pacify Esau who is bearing down on him. But there is no time now to enter into any further peace treaty attempts, and so he takes his whole family (his two wives, his two maids, his eleven children) and sends them across the river for their protection.

And so we read here in verse 22, "And he took his two wives" - that would be Leah and Rachel - "and his two maids" - that would be Bilhah and Zilpah; they were like concubines. And with these four women Jacob had thirteen children. Leah has brought him seven children: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and a daughter Dinah. Rachel has brought him two children: Joseph and Benjamin. And Bilhah has brought him two children: Dan and Naphtali. And Zilpah has brought him two children: Gad and Asher. And they will become the twelve tribes of Israel.

And so we read in verse 22, "and crossed the ford of the Jabbok." That's a river, a stream really, that runs east of the Jordan River into the Jordan River about 24 miles north of the Dead Sea and south of the Sea of Galilee. I mean, Jacob is playing defense right now. He's in defensive mold trying to protect the lives of his own children, his wives, his maids.

And we read in verse 23, "He took them and sent them across the stream." It's a little hard to totally piece that together, whether he himself crossed the stream and then came back, or he just sent them across the stream. Either way, they're on that side of the stream and, as we will see, Jacob will remain where he was.

"And he sent across whatever he had." I mean, he just vacated his possessions to the other side of the stream: food, and supplies, and livestock, and personal possessions. And Jacob is in a panic attack. Jacob is restless, and he is troubled, and he is so fearful of his anticipated meeting with Esau, sleep completely evades him. And so he wakes up in the middle of the night, perhaps even sweating, and he sends them across for their protection, while he will remain behind.

I don't know what's going on in your life tonight, but in a crowd this large, a congregation this large, there will surely be many among us who are having trouble sleeping at night. Maybe you awaken in the middle of the night because of dwindling finances. It may be because of a floundering job, or a failing business, or a distant spouse, or rebellious children. But you find your eyes popping open and you assume that it's 6:00 or 7:00 in the morning, and you find out it's 1:30 in the morning, and you cannot go back to sleep. That's exactly where Jacob is with the weight of the world pressing heavy upon him.

The next thing we see is not only Jacob troubled, but Jacob wrestling. In verse 24 the story takes a rather unexpected turn. In verse 24, "Then Jacob was left alone." His wife, his maids, his children have all left; he's by himself. No doubt, his wheels are spinning. No doubt, he's processing what's about to happen. No doubt, it's becoming exaggerated in his mind. Every time he processes this it's becoming larger and larger and heavier and heavier up upon him. And he discovers that while he is all alone, he is not alone.

We read, "and a man" - just stop right there - "and a man." A man unexpectedly and unannounced appears. He assumed he was alone, but he's not alone. He's in the dark, it's the still of the night, and suddenly he feels a hand lay hold of him. It no doubt startles him and terrifies him. This man is a real man with a real physical body. He has arms and legs and hands; has laid hold of him. But he's also more than a man. And we read in verse 28 that this man identifies himself as God. What is this? God in human flesh.

We read in verse 30 that again he identifies himself as God. This one who has laid hold of Jacob is none other than the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ, appearing before His first coming, the one who is truly God and truly man, as much God as though He is not man, as much man as though He is not God. But truly God, truly man as the ancient confession says. This is the preincarnate Christ – a Christophany, an appearing of Christ. And as we read the Old Testament there are several such Christophanies that remarkably appear.

We've already seen two of them in the book of Genesis. We saw Christ appear to Sarah, in Genesis 16:11, by a spring of water. We saw Christ appear to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre in Genesis 18:1. And later He will appear to Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3:2. And Christ will appear to Joshua the night before he fought the battle of Jericho. Christ graciously appeared to Joshua to know that the victory would belong to Christ. And Christ appeared to Gideon under the oak tree in Judges 6:14.

So that this is not a isolated anomaly, a one-time appearing of Christ. And it reminds us of Christ's preexistence before His virgin birth that we read about in the Gospels. In fact, Jesus has existed from all eternity past. He is the uncreated Creator of all that there is. He is the first cause of which everything in the universe is the subsequent effect. This is who has laid hold of Jacob. And if you know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, this is who has laid hold of you as well.

And so we read in verse 24, "a man wrestling with him." The hymn refers to Jacob. This man, this God-man now begins to wrestle. The God-man is the initiator, the God-man is the seeker. Jacob is passive, the God-man is aggressive and initiating and acting and begins to wrestle with Jacob.

This word for "wrestle" that you see in your Bible in verse 24 is an interesting word. It means "to get dusty," and the idea is they're rolling in the dirt, and the Lord Jesus Christ has perhaps a headlock on Jacob. God is wrestling with Jacob. Listen to this: it is not Jacob that is wrestling with Christ, it is Christ who is wrestling with Jacob, and there is a purpose in this which we will see soon. "And it lasted" – at the end of verse 24 – "until daybreak." Throughout the night they have been in this death struggle, this wrestling until sunrise; and it was agonizing for Jacob, this

fierce driving for hours; and it was draining every ounce of energy that that Jacob has.

A. W. Pink writes, "Jacob was not wrestling with this man to obtain a blessing; instead, the man was wrestling with Jacob to gain some object from him, and that object would be his own life." Pink goes on, "It was to reduce Jacob to a sense of his nothingness, to cause him to see what a poor, helpless, worthless creature he was without Him." Pink adds, "It was to teach Jacob the all all-important lesson, that in weakness lies our strength."

And so Jesus is in the process of draining every ounce of energy and strength and power out of Jacob, so that Jacob's life can finally be what it must be. As long as Jacob is strong in himself, Jacob does not amount to anything for God. It is not until Jacob is stripped of all power and drained of all personal strength, that his own self-confidence is dashed, and becomes Christ-confident will Jacob be able to be used by God. Same is true in your life, in my life. There's no one too weak for God to use, only someone who's too strong in themselves.

So, verse 25, "When he" - Jacob - "saw that he had not prevailed against him," - this divine wrestler - Jacob saw that "I cannot overcome him. I cannot prevail with this God-man. I cannot gain the advantage with this God-man. This God-man has me pinned down. He's too strong. He's too superior to me.

"When Jacob saw" - and that word "saw" in verse 25 means "to perceive," "to learn." It's not just to visually see, it is to intellectually see that he had not prevailed against him no matter how hard he tried. "He" - this divine wrestler - "touched the socket with his thigh." Just barely touched it. It's how powerful He is. That's how in control He is.

In this one-on-one wrestling match, it's not a fair match. Jesus Christ is far superior, and He but, as it were, almost just licks his finger and just touches the socket of his thigh, the tender spot, so that the socket of Jacob's thigh was dislocated. While he wrestled with Him, his hip is thrown out of joint. He is suddenly now crippled. He is suddenly now humbled. He is now suddenly brought low. He is now brought to his knees. That's exactly where Jacob needs to be. And that's exactly where you and I need to be today.

Your self-reliance and your self-confidence in yourself needs to be dislocated.

And we need to understand from this that Jesus Christ can put us on our knees anytime He so pleases. He can humble us in a moment. We can be riding high, wide and fancy. The sun is shining, everything seems to be in place. We take our eyes off Him, we think it's us, and He can pull the rug out from under us in a heartbeat. He can touch the socket of our thigh with His little finger and put us in the prone position on our back: with a doctor's report, with a bank statement, with a spouse's words, with a child's decision. Suddenly our whole life can be dislocated.

James Montgomery Boice writes, "Have you ever had your life put out a joint by God? Have you ever had your own little plans dislocated? You were trying to go your own way and do your own thing, contrary to God's will, when suddenly out of the blue God used sickness, or a loss of a job, or some severe setback or a disappointment to bring you to the end of yourself to turn to Him."

I think every one of us in this room today can give testimony to that. None of us receive a free pass to go through life. And in reality it is the great blessing of God to cripple us. It is the favor of God to remove all self-sufficiency and all self-dependence from us and to put us flat on our back so that we finally look up to Him. Instead of letting us just continue to cruise through life the way we are, God intervenes graciously, and crushes us and cripples us to turn us around.

This , third, to "Jacob clinging," verse 26, "Jacob clinging." Verse 26, "Then he" – the God-man, this man who is God, the divine wrestler – "then he said, 'Let me go, for the dawn is breaking.'" There's a certain irony about that, because Jesus Christ is in the superior position. Jesus Christ is omnipotent. Jesus Christ has all authority in heaven and earth, but He says to Jacob, "Let me go." Well in reality, it's Christ who has hold of Jacob, and Jacob is doing all he can to hang on with Christ, and the irony is Jesus now says, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking."

But he said, verse 26, "But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." Jacob recognizes that this one who is wrestling with him, who is truly a man yet truly God, is the source of all blessing. Jacob will not be

blessed unless this one blesses him, and that he is the giver of all blessing. And there is no place else to look for this blessing in the past. Jacob has tried to connive his way to steal the blessing from his brother Esau by manipulation and trickery. But that was Jacob's doing, that was Jacob's doing. He was building his own little kingdom, he was doing his own little thing on his own little agenda.

But now he is pinned to the mat, and he is clinging to God in human flesh, and he pleads with Him and says, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." He now has, as it were, a death grip on the Lord Jesus Christ. It's not just a holding him with an open hand, he has all ten fingers wrapped around the Lord Jesus Christ and refuses to let go until Christ blesses him. To this point Jacob has been so self-willed, self-determined, self-ambitious, self-driven, and now he is suddenly and finally dependent upon Christ. Rather than conniving and conspiring to get the blessing from man as he has sought with Esau, Jacob now has to deal with God. Jacob now has to do business with God in order to secure the blessing, and Jacob now is forced to cling to the Son of God perhaps for the very first time in his life. There's no way Jacob can remain the same after this encounter.

This morning you and I need to be clinging to God and to Jesus Christ. You and I need to live with a holy desperation and a holy dependence upon God for everything in our lives. It is in Him that we live and move and have our being. Jesus said in John 15:5, "Apart from Me you can do nothing." We think we can do lots of things; but anything of any spiritual lasting eternal value, we cannot even tie our shoelaces apart from the grace that He gives to us.

This morning we need to lay hold of the throne of grace like this and not let go. We need to keep on asking and keep on seeking and keep on knocking until heaven's door opens. You and I need to cling to Christ for spiritual power and spiritual direction and spiritual wisdom and spiritual discernment every step of the way. We're no different than Jacob. Human nature has not changed. Just as Jacob is now clinging to Christ, so you and I must be abiding in Christ, and Christ in us, if we are to bear much fruit.

This leads, forth, in verse 27 to "Jacob receiving." Verse 27, "So he" – the God-man – "said to him," – Jacob – "What is your name?" Oh, Jesus knows his name; He calls His own sheep by name. The point of the question is for Jacob to audit his own soul. The point of the question is for Jacob to

look inward to see, "Who am I really?" A name represents what a person is in the Bible. So, "What is your name?" is in reality, "What has your life been to this point? Who are you on the inside? What are you all about? What are you living for? What is your aim?"

And he said, "Jacob," which means literally "heel-grabber" or "heel-holder," and metaphorically it means "deceiver," "supplanter," "cheater." That's what Jacob is and has been his whole life. He's been one manipulator to get his own way. He's been a conman with his whole life, he's just talked his way in and out of places. And as he says, "My name is Jacob," there's a real sense in what Jesus is driving at in asking this question, "What is your name?"

"My name is Jacob," is for Jacob to acknowledge his sin, to acknowledge his own self-righteousness, to acknowledge his own sinful life to this point. He is calling him to confess his sin, how he has fallen short of the glory of God, "You are nothing but a Jacob." And that is true of every one of us in this room upon our entrance into this world. We were all born Jacobs. The psalmist says, "We came forth from our mother's womb speaking lies." And in order to enter the kingdom of God, we must confess our sin. No one has ever been converted and saved who did not say, "I am a Jacob," that, "I that I have sinned, and I have fallen short of the glory of God."

Jesus came to save only one kind of person: a sinner. And if you do not confess your sin and you die in your sin, I can assure you Jesus did not come for you. He came for the unrighteous, not the righteous. He is a physician who has come, not for those who are well, but for those who are sick. And as long as we think we've got our act together, and as long as we think, "I'm fine, everything's OK," you will never know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. He is a Savior of those who are perishing and who are drowning. So, what is your name? Your name may be Sally or Frank or whatever, but until you're converted your name is Jacob.

Verse 28, "Jesus said, 'Your name shall no longer be Jacob, because right now at this defining moment, your life will never be the same. Right now as you stand at this intersection of life, everything you have been to this point will be ancient history, and you're about to receive a new life.'"

He says, "Your name will no longer be Jacob. Those days are over. Who you once were, Jacob, is now being buried, and there's going to be a new person that will arise from the grave. Your name shall no longer be Jacob. You will no longer live the way you've been living. You will no longer call your shots and do what you want to do when you want to do it, how you want to do it, with whom you want to do it. You will no longer be the compass of your own life. You will no longer be self-willed and self-reliant. Your new name now is Israel, and this signifies that you are becoming a new person, someone what you have not previously been. What you are now to become, what you are now becoming is antithetical to your old life. It is in complete juxtaposition. Israel, Israel is now your new name. It's your new identity. It's your new life. It's your new purpose and your new direction."

"Israel" is a word that we're very familiar with in the Bible. But do you know what it means? It's a compound word. "El" means "God, Elohim." And you hear it in Ezekiel, Daniel, Samuel. El: God. And "Sarah" means "to fight," "to struggle," "to dominate." When you combine Sarah with El (Israel) it means now "God dominates," "God prevails," "God governs," "God is in charge."

And so Jacob who now becomes Israel is under new management: he's under the lordship of Jesus Christ. And anytime anywhere anyone is ever converted to Christ, they that moment recognize the authority of Jesus Christ over their life, and they submit and surrender to the lordship of Jesus Christ, or you may not enter into the kingdom of God.

"Your name is Israel; for you have striven with God." God? It said in verse earlier it was a man who laid hold of him. And now, "you've striven with God. As you strove with this man, it is the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ." We can connect the dots: "For you have striven with God." You see that in your Bible.

But note the next three words: "and with man." "As you have striven with this one who is God, he is also a man. He has come in a human body and in human flesh, just like He will centuries later when He would enter this world through the portal of a virgin's womb, when God would create a body for Him in the womb of Mary. But here God just pulls back the veil ever so slightly just for the flash of the moment as a preview of what it will be like in the fullness of time in the year 5 or 6 BC, in the year that Caesar

Augustus issued a decree that all the known world should have a census. Here is Christ just momentarily, the Creator of the world just momentarily stepping into the world to lay hold of Jacob, because he has such a strategic link in this chain of the messianic line.

"For you've striven with God and with man and have prevailed." But really, who prevailed with whom? It wasn't that Jacob overpowered God in human flesh, it was that God in human flesh overpowered Jacob. It was God who triumphed over Jacob and conquered him. And anytime God the Son, God the Father, God the Spirit lays hold of life, it's over. It is irresistible grace. It is effectual grace. "My sheep hear My voice and I know them, and they follow Me." So up to this point it was Jacob who ruled his own life and called his own shots, but from this moment on it is God in human flesh, the Son of God who will now rule his life, who will govern and prevail over his life.

Has this happened to you? Has God laid hold of you? It's one thing to come to church, it's something else to come to Christ. Has God laid hold of your soul and has He assumed the superior position in your life? Has He touched the socket of your thigh and just dropped you to your knees in prayer in a moment that you called upon His name? Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. That was God who pinned you to the ground, that you would call upon His name.

The next thing I want you to see is in verse 29, "Jacob inquiring." In verse 29, "Then Jacob asked him," - the God-man, the divine wrestler - 'Please tell me your name. You've given me a new name. What is your name? Who are you; because I've never met you before.' But he" - the divine wrestler - "said, 'Why is it that you ask my name?' - in other words 'You know who I am. Do you not yet know who I am? You know who I am.' And he" - the divine wrestler - "blessed him." And now for the first time in Jacob's life he is the recipient of divine spiritual blessing. This blessing is Jacob's new name, it's his new life, it's his new humility, it's his new posture. There was no way Jacob could meet the God-man and for his life not to be radically and dramatically changed.

So, verse 30, "So Jacob named the place Peniel, for he said, 'I've seen God face to face.'" This is a divine encounter of an intimate personal kind. "Peniel" means "the face of God." "And he named this place" - east of the Jordan River - "Peniel, because I have seen God face to face. As I look

into the face of this man," Colossians 1:15 says that "Jesus is the image of the invisible God." When you look into the face of Jesus Christ, you see God. Philip said in John 14, "Show us the Father and that's enough," and Jesus said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." Jesus Christ is co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father. All that the Father is, the Son is. The Son is equally holy, equally sovereign, equally immutable, equally omnipotent, equally full of truth, equally every attribute of God.

"For I have seen God face to face," - and then he adds this at the end of verse 30 - "yet my life has been preserved." Jacob, now Israel, understands something that a lot of people today don't quite understand, that if you look into the face of God in your sinful human flesh, you would be burned up like a crisp, you could not survive. That's why when Jesus came He had to be clothed in the form of a bond-servant. The veil had to be pulled over Him; and only on a few occasions, like on the mount of transfiguration, the veil was pulled back, and the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ shined forth brighter than ten thousand suns.

But no one can look into the face of God and survive and live. That is why when we go to heaven you and I will have to have a glorified body. We will have to have a resurrected, glorified body with glorified eyes to even be able to look upon God and not burn up in His immediate presence. We will have to have glorified everything just to survive the immediate presence of God. And here Jacob is aware of this, and he's almost surprised: "Yet my life has been preserved."

What a glorious future awaits you and me one day to behold the face of God in the person of His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Theologians refer to this as the "beatific vision." If there is a ladder and the blessings of salvation ascend upward, and as we begin with regeneration being born again, and being sealed in Christ, and being reconciled to God, and God's wrath being propitiated, and we've been redeemed out of the slave market of sin, the Holy Spirit has come to indwell us, and we just keep working our way up the ladder. At the very head of the ladder, the blessing of all blessings, the greatest of all blessings is to see God. That awaits you.

In ancient times, mere citizens of a kingdom never saw their king. I mean, that was reserved for only those inside the palace, the tight inner circle, the royal family. Only the advisors of the king were allowed to come into the presence of the king. The farmer, the blacksmith, the maiden would live

their whole lives and never see the face of their king. But in the kingdom of God, every son, every daughter, every citizen of this kingdom will have immediate, intimate access to God, and we will behold the face of God, and we will we will be transfigured, if you will, into the same image.

First John 3:2 says, "When He appears, we shall be made like Him, and we shall see Him just as He is." We will not see the humble carpenter from Galilee. We will not see the meek Messiah who turns the other cheek. We will see the Sovereign of the universe seated at the right hand of God the Father, King of kings, Lord of lords. We will see Him as He is in unveiled glory that will dazzle our hearts throughout all the ages to come. This is just a sneak preview for Jacob of future glory.

Finally in verse 31, "Jacob limping." "Now the sun rose upon him." This long night of wrestling with the Son of God is now over. "Now the sun rose upon him just as he crossed over Penuel," – and note this – "and he was limping on his thigh." For the rest of his life he walked with a limp. It's a new limp, because he has a new life. No longer self-energized. No longer skipping through life. No longer self-sufficient. He's now humbled from his struggle with God, and he will never be the same again, because it's impossible to encounter the Son of God and not walk with a limp.

"Therefore, to this day the sons of Israel do not eat the sinew of the hip which is on the socket of the thigh." When he says "to this day" – Moses is the writer; even until Moses' day they would not eat the sinew of the hip. It's not recorded in the Mosaic Law, but it became oral tradition – "because he" – the God-man – "touched the socket of Jacob's thigh in the sinew of the hip."

Wow, what an encounter. Have you had an encounter like this with Christ? It may not be in the middle of the night in the wilderness after you've sent your family away, but it may have been at a church camp, it may have been at a conference, it may have been in a bedroom, it may have been out in the parking lot after church. But you met Christ in just as real way; and more than that, He met you in just as real way.

I want to conclude this by saying that some believe this is the time of Jacob's conversion, and they have a strong case to make. And using that as something of a template, I want to conclude by giving you three

indispensable marks of a true conversion that we see in this passage. And as we look at this, you need to examine yourself to see whether you are in the faith: "Have you been converted to Christ?" And these three indispensable marks are, number one, "A crisis." No one is converted without a struggle with God.

No one skips through the narrow gate. No one giggles into the kingdom of heaven. There's always a great personal upheaval that takes place as God brings you to a breaking point, to break you from yourself and to break you from the world. No one enters the kingdom of God easily: "Here, pray this prayer: 'I'm a sinner, I'm a sinner. I believe in Jesus, I believe in Jesus. Thank You for saving me, thank You for saving me.' Good, you're in." No true conversion happens like that. You may have read a prayer, but there had to be down in your heart and your soul a gathering storm of conviction of sin.

And Jesus said in Luke 13:24, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate." It's a Greek word *agónizomai*. You can hear "agonize." You agonize through the narrow gate. There is no easy believism. Anytime anyone is ever converted, it's never easy. There's no Novocain to soften the pain. There is a deep conviction of sin. The Holy Spirit has come into the world to convict men of sin and righteousness and judgment. And we see this crisis in Jacob's life; and God will bring you to a crisis point. It's not you going to camp and tossing a pine cone into the fire and, "I'm in." It's not you singing the last verse of some song, and so therefore, "I'm in." And it really brings into question some child evangelism, because there must be a crisis when someone enters into the kingdom.

Second, not only crisis, but "Christ." This crisis drives us to Christ. No one will ever be converted without coming to faith in Jesus Christ. Doesn't matter what continent you live on, it doesn't matter what city or nation you're a part of; Jesus is the only door of the sheep. He says, "I am the way and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." And it's by no happenstance that we see the Son of God so prominent in this text. It was a crisis that involved Jesus Christ.

And the last word I'll give you is "crippled." It leaves you crippled. Every true believer walks with a limp of true humility. The number one virtue in the kingdom of God is humility. No one enters the kingdom without being humble. In fact, you can't even love without being humble – looking away

from yourself and looking to others, and specifically looking to Christ. Jacob walked with a limp because he had suffered this crisis with Christ. Jacob who has been a strutting peacock to this point now walks with lowliness of mind and heart. The deceiver has become dependent, the supplanter is now saved.

If you have never come to faith in Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of the living God, born of a virgin, lived a sinless and perfect life, died a sin-bearing substitutionary death upon the cross, was buried, raised from the dead, has ascended to the right hand of God the Father, this Jesus: call upon His name; turn away from yourself; stop trying to be your own savior. Humble yourself beneath the mighty hand of God, and He will give you much grace, much forgiveness, and clothe you with the perfect righteousness of His Son.

This is the greatest offer that would ever be extended to you. It could happen today, this moment. You could do business with God in your heart. We wouldn't ask you to raise a hand or walk forward or anything like that, just in your heart right there where you sit, to do business with God, and say to God, "I'm Jacob. I need for You to prevail over my life and save me." If you would call out to Him, Jesus has said, "Him who comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out." He's the friend of sinners. He's come to seek and to save that which is lost. That could be you even today. May it be so. Let us pray.

[Prayer] Father, this passage is bigger than life, it's bigger than our lives here today. In many ways, it towers over us and overshadows us. For many, even most of us here today, we have encountered Christ like this. It was the time we denied ourself and took up a cross and began to follow Christ. For those who remain Jacob and have not yet confessed their sin to You and called upon Your Son, may they do so in the quietness of this moment and receive a new name in heaven, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.