

**Wrestle With God in Prayer**

- Confssn: know Jcb fr OT? I don't like guy; think he's jerk. I know bad say: patriarch; grndsn/Abrhm, fr/faith; it was grandpa Abrhm took dad Isaac (child) up mnt, about scrfc til Lord stppd. Then Isaac grew up, married Rebkh; twins, E&J. Jcb became fr 12 tribes Isrl. In fact, today we hear how name chngd to Isrl. So whole cntry, nation/Isrl: namd aftr him. But I just don't like guy. Remem what did? At home, cookng pot/stew; and when starving twin bro E comes in fr wrkng in field, Jcb won't give bite eat unless E gives up brthrht. Then trcks blind fr into thnkng he's E (puts on E's clths; hairy gtskn arms); trcks blind dad into givng him blssng instd E. So of course E's tickd off; going kill Jcb. Jcb runs awy fr home; wrks for U Laban; they shphrds. And then Jcb commits bsns fraud by concoctng plan get hlthy shp into his flck, and get weak shp into Laban's flock. (Now, of course, this: after Laban tricks Jcb into marryng wrng dgthr.) But still, Jcb's a liar & cheater; his name even means heel-grabbr, deceivr; been trying to trip ppl up since day born. So I just don't like the guy.
- But God did: loved Jcb; had huge plans for Jcb & made huge proms to Jcb. In fact God aprpd to Jcb in some pretty extrrdnry ways. Once walkng, **"the anpls/God met him" (Gen 32:1)**; that's all it says. But Jcb met anpls! And then, remem Jcb's dream, strwy/hvsn, w/anpls asc/desc stairs, and Lord at top? In that dream, Lord promsd Jcb: **"Your dscndnts'll be like dust/earth... All ppls on earth'll be blssd thru you & your offsprng. I am w/you & will watch over you whrvr you go... I will not leave you until I have done what I have promsd you" (28:14-15)**. So even tho Jcb is a liar & deceivr, he gets see God, and bels proms/God. And that's what you need know re Jcb to undrstnd today's rdng. Today we're in Gen 32, and Jcb's about meet up w/E for 1<sup>st</sup> time in almst 20 yrs. Does E still want kill him? Well, E's coming w/400 men; so doesn't look good. But Jcb prays: **"O God of my fr Abrhm, God of my fr Isaac, Lord... save me, I pray, fr hand of my bro E... You have said, 'I will surely make you prspr & will make your dscndnts like sand/sea" (32:9-12)**. Spends evngng alone in prayer.
- Which brings us to this: **vs. 24**. In dead/nght, random strngr apprchs Jcb & pcks fight. This is no angry local or nghtmr or vision. This is real live, hrs-long wrstlmg mtch btw mrtl man & God self! We know it's God bec at end he says: **"You have strggld w/God;"** and Jcb: **"I saw God face to face."** So Jcb physcly wrstld w/God! How this even wrk? Did God take on human form? Is this 2<sup>nd</sup> prsn/Trnty, J self, taking on humn flsh, temprly, centrs before takes on humn flsh at birth/Bthlm? Probably! So they wrstl eo in mid/nght. And **vs. 25a** – woah, thnk re that: actly says God cld not ovrrpwr Jcb; mndblwng! Surely can't mean Jcb strngr than God; just means Jcb held on! **Vs. 25**. He put his hip out/sockt; very painful; now no way Jcb can beat oppnt! But Jcb is persistent; holds on; and says (really imp!): **vs. 26b**.
- And that really is point of this psg! Besides the mysterious encounter w/God the midnight wrstlr, what is God tchnng us here? Tchnng us: when God makes big/bold proms, he wants us to hold onto him in faith and to hold him to his proms! Even when he challngs/wrstls us, he doesn't want us to give up/in. Wants us to say, w/Jcb: **"I will not let you go."** And way we do that is to wrstl w/God in prayer. That's how we wrstl God today: in prayer – bec I'm pretty sure God's not going come dwn, start up midnight wrstlmg match w/you or me. But when challngng times come into our lives, and it feels like God is pickng a fight, that's when he wants us to wrestle w/him in prayer.
- Smtms we find ourselves in situtns much like Jcb. 1) Fear. Jcb was afraid; his angry bro's camped out w/400 fightng men ready meet him. Smtms we're afraid too. Think times you've been afraid: going lose job, lose loved one, for your hlth/safety. We had over 100 schl kids hunkrd down in ch bsmnt on Wed bec of tornado warning. Smtms afraid! 2) Guilt. Jcb felt his guilt. Cheatd bro, dad, uncle; slept w/women wasn't married to; hurt ppl around him; knew it wrng; now felt guilt. We know what's like feel guilt too. We know our sin; hurt ppl around us; disobey God; know it's wrng; feel our guilt. 3) Pain. Jcb felt pain. His hip: out/joint; every tiny movmnt shot pain thru entire body. We know physcl pain too; know what's like for body to hurt, be sick, need healng. And 4) Jcb wrstld God in drknss/nght. It's usually during the drknss/nght that drkst/thghts cross thru minds. Nighttime is when we reflect on failures & frailty; we sin in our thghts and our thghts dwell on our sins. So it's during times like these (fear, guilt, pain, nght) that it feels like God's wrstlmg us. And it's during times like these that God wants us: hold on; hold him to his proms; wrstl w/him in prayer.

- That's wht Jcb was doing! **Vs. 26b.** "God, you told me: my dscndnts'd fill earth, and one my dscndnts'd be blssng/Sav all ppl; you'd be w/me, wch over me, wldn't leave me. That's wht you promsd, verbatim. And I'm going hold you to those proms!" **I will not let you go!** That is wrstlng w/God in prayer!
- And that's what God wants us do, as well. "LJ, you promsd me: chose me before crtn/wrld; in baptsm you adopted fam & washed away sin; you've creditd your sinlss life to me, & your dth/crs has made full paymnt for my sin; bec you live, smday I'll rise/live; surely you w/me to end age; if I ask anthng acc to your will, you'll hear/answer my prayers; nothing can seprt me fr your love, & in all things you work for my good; dth cannot defeat me bec you defeated dth; I have an eternal home in hvn w/you. That's what you promsd, verbatim. And I'm going hold you to those proms!" **I will not let you go!**
- That is wrstlng w/God in prayer! When feels like God's pushng/chllngng you, push/chllng him back – not dsrspctflly but boldly, in faith. Hold him to his wrd. He: "**Ask, seek, knock**" (Lk 11:9). Don't just give little tap on door; beat door dwn! Look at today's Gos: "**J told his discs a prbl to show them that they shld always pray & not give up**" (Lk 18:1). J wants you be just like widow who kept pestng unjust judge for justice. But guess what: judge of hvn/earth that you pray to: not unjust. He's not going put you off; he's going answer your prayer quickly! That's what he proms. And so, when God makes big/bold proms, hold him to those proms; wrestle him in prayer; and say: **I will not let you go.**
- And you can do that bec you have a Sav God who will not let you go. He didn't let go of you when you were lost in sin; and he won't let go of you when your fear, guilt, pain, or drknss/nght push you to brink of despair. He's got you; he's holding you; he's wrstlng you, but in love, w/same love that drove him to cross. And he will not let go of you; so don't let go of him; wrstl him in prayer; hold him to his word. And I prom you – no, he proms you – that he will keep his word.
- I still think Jcb's a jerk; I don't like guy. But he is persistent; I'll give him that. Despite his deception, trusted God's proms, actly wrstld w/God, and held God to his word. And in the end, he got the blssng. God chngd name from Jcb (heel-grabbr, deceivr) to Isrl (God-wrstlr). And the reunion w/E – well, E ran, gave him big hug! God kept his word. Maybe there's little bit/Jcb in all of us. We're sinners too; we're no better than Jcb. But we trust God's proms; and we have J as proof God keeps proms! But we need reminders; we need be chllngd. So smtms God wrstls us. When he does, don't give up/in; don't lose hope/faith. Hold God to his word; trust his proms; and w/bold & confidnt faith, wrestle w/God in prayer.

### Genesis 32:22-30

<sup>22</sup> That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. <sup>23</sup> After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. <sup>24</sup> So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. <sup>25</sup> When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. <sup>26</sup> Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

<sup>27</sup> The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered. <sup>28</sup> Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome."

<sup>29</sup> Jacob said, "Please tell me your name." But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there.

<sup>30</sup> So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."