

Jacob – A Man Who Constantly Wrestled with God

Scripture: Genesis 32:22-32

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had already tried to kick God out of the human stage, to seek independence, and to go their own way. To this day, human beings still do not want God and are constantly fighting to gain control over their own lives. The religion of most Hong Kong people is to believe in themselves. "Everything is fake, you can only trust yourself!" This is the catchphrase of Hong Kong people.

Now let us look at the story of Jacob. Jacob spent most of his life fighting with others. It was his nature to like to fight in his own way, to use his own strategies to make things happen, and to control and manipulate everything by himself. We are like Jacob in many ways.

Before Jacob was born, he was already fighting with his brother in his mother's womb. When he was born, Jacob held on to his brother's heel tightly. Why? Rushing to be the first born! He used his own methods to seize Esau's blessing as the eldest son, so Esau was resentful and planned to kill him. He had no choice but to flee and seek refuge with his uncle Laban in a distant place.

Laban was as cunning and greedy as Jacob. They took advantage of each other and fought for 20 years, but in the end he was defeated by Jacob. When Jacob went to Laban, he was penniless. Twenty years later, when he left, he was able to "legally" seize most of Laban's wealth. He owned a large number of sheep and cattle, servants and maids, and was richer than Laban.

He had been away from home for 20 years and missed home very much. Now was the time to return home in glory. On his way home, he received news that his brother heard that he was going home and brought 400 people to pick him up. Jacob was terrified, not knowing whether his brother was going to kill him or to greet him. So he dealt with it the way he always did: on his own! He carefully prepared a large gift of sheep and cattle, divided the cattle and sheep into companies, and sent his servants in companies before him. Each team is separated by a long distance. He planned to calm his brother's anger, and his gifts came before his presence. If his brother turned against him, he could still escape in time since he was the last one in the row.

When they arrived at the Jabbok Ford, all the people and livestock had passed by, and he was the only one left there that night. In the evening, God came to wrestle with him. The story of Jacob wrestling with God teaches us a very important truth: God will not let us go until we surrender and give control of our lives to Him. Only when we surrender control of our lives can God renew and shape us.

The first step to being renewed and shaped by God is to be honest with yourself. During the wrestling session, God asked Jacob what his name was. Does God not know his name? Of course not! The original meaning of Jacob is "aggressor, deceiver, manipulator". God wants Jacob to face his true self – I have always used my own methods to deceive, manipulate, and take advantage!

In the wrestling, God broke Jacob's hamstring. Suddenly, he lost his ability to resist. He had no one to turn to. The only thing he could hold on to was God himself: "I will not let you go unless you bless me, God!" (32:26) The second step to being renewed and shaped by God is to experience brokenness. Before your ego is broken, you are still holding on to other things for support; when you refuse to let go, you have no hands to hold on to God. Your ego must be broken by God before you can be blessed!

It was certainly painful for Jacob to have his hamstring twisted. Of course there is pain in being broken by God. Without pain, the stubborn self cannot be broken. To break us, it has to be painful enough. The greater the pain, the greater the breakthrough.

Discussion Questions

1. Have you been wrestling with God lately, arguing with Him in some area of your life and refusing to let go? Are there areas in your life where you are still refusing to surrender to God?
2. Are you experiencing some pain of being broken by God? This broken pain may be related to your relationship, career, or your personality. No matter which aspect, you feel that this period is not easy to get through. Please share these experiences so that others can share this pain.