

# Contending with God in Prayer 3

## “Face to Face with God”

Karl Barth (Swiss theologian) – “To clasp the hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world’. I like that word ‘uprising’ it reminds me of what Jesus says in Matthew 11:12, *‘And from the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.’*”

Recently I was meditating on this verse and I was reminded of how the pre-incarnate Christ had a wrestling match with Jacob. In Genesis 32 Jacob grabs hold of Him, and wrestled with Him, and would not let Him go until he got the answer to his prayer that he was looking for.

Have you ever thought of your prayer life in that way? As a violent thing, as a forceful thing, something you have to fight for in the spirit? That’s radical prayer.

### Life of Jacob

Now Jacob had not seen his twin brother, Esau, in a very long time. You may remember the story of how years before he had tricked his brother out of his birthright and stole his blessing. Because of that, Esau wanted to kill Jacob. But Jacob’s mother found out about Esau’s plan and she arranged for Jacob to live with relatives far away. Now, after many years had gone by, God tells Jacob to go back home but he’s terrified that his brother Esau still wants to kill him.

So he comes to the Jabbok river and crossing it means crossing into Esau’s territory. Jacob sends out some servants to make contact with Esau, but they find that he is already on his way with 400 very mean looking men.

Look at Genesis 32:6-7 *“And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, ‘We came to your brother Esau, and he is coming to meet you, and there are four hundred men with him.’ Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed...”*

Well, of course he was. If you are going to go and shake someone’s hand you don’t take 400 men along with you. It was obvious Esau was unhappy; it was obvious Esau meant business.

So Jacob decides that he would try to win his brother over by sending him some gifts.

He then sends his servants ahead of him with gifts for Esau, 220 goats, 220 sheep, 30 camels, 40 cows, 10 bulls, and 30 donkeys. As he was making these preparations, he said to himself, *“I may appease him with the present that goes ahead of me, and afterward I shall see his face. Perhaps he will accept me.”* Genesis 32:20.

Read: Genesis 32:9-12 – *“And Jacob said, ‘O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O Lord who said to me, “Return to your country and to your kindred, that I may do you good,” 10 I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps. 11 Please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of*

*Esau, for I fear him, that he may come and attack me, the mothers with the children. **12** But you said, “I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.””*

### **Coming Face to Face with God**

1) Jacob was being tested in the middle of God’s will.

a) Difficulties, delays, and obstacles are not proof of being out of Gods will!

*Genesis 31:3 – “Then the Lord said to Jacob, ‘Return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you.’”*

b) Why did God require Jacob to wrestle in prayer?

Jacob’s name meant “the cheat.” God wanted to change his name but He had to first change his character!

i) God may have been testing the depth of desire.

*Jeremiah 29:13 – “You will seek Me and find Me, when you seek Me with all your heart.”*

ii) God may have been testing the level of humility.

iii) God may have been testing the purity of motive.

*James 4:3 – “When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives.”*

2) Jacob went instantly into prayer.

a) Jacob would act in the natural, but only after he made it a matter of prayer.

b) Don’t contend in the flesh until you have contended in prayer.

3) Jacob reminded God of His promise.

*Genesis 32:9-12 NLT – “Then Jacob prayed, ‘O God of my grandfather Abraham, and God of my father, Isaac—O Lord, You told me, “Return to your own land and to your relatives.” **And you promised me,** “I will treat you kindly.”’<sup>10</sup> I am not worthy of all the unfailing love and faithfulness You have shown to me, your servant. When I left home and crossed the Jordan River, I owned nothing except a walking stick. Now my household fills two large camps!’<sup>11</sup> O Lord, please rescue me from the hand of my brother, Esau. I am afraid that he is coming to attack me, along with my wives and children. **But you promised me,** “I will surely treat you kindly, and I will multiply your descendants until they become as numerous as the sands along the seashore”—too many to count.”*

a) Do you have a promise in your spirit?

State it - Pray it - Repeat it!

b) Don't let the devil rob you because your own past failures. *"I am not worthy..."* (v.10)

4) Jacob did what he could in the natural to solve the conflict.

a) Jacob stole the birthright. He needed to make it right.

Repentance and restitution are often necessary before God acts. He sent over 500 specimens of livestock as gifts in advance to his brother.

b) I wonder sometimes if our miracle is waiting for us to make some things right?

5) Jacob struggled with God through the night.

Genesis 32:24-29 – *"And Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. **25** When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. **26** Then he said, 'Let me go, for the day has broken.' But Jacob said, 'I will not let you go unless you bless me.' **27** And he said to him, 'What is your name?' And he said, 'Jacob.' **28** Then he said, 'Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed.' **29** Then Jacob asked him, 'Please tell me your name.' But he said, 'Why is it that you ask my name?' And there he blessed him."*

a) Alone but not alone

b) When God keeps you awake, get ready for a visitation.

c) He refused to let go until God blessed him.

d) He stopped fighting and started clinging!

6) Jacob got a new name.

a) *"you have striven with God"* (v.28) literally means you have contended with God!

b) This change indicated a new nature.

Conclusion: Chapter 33 tells us there was no battle, no fighting, no drama.