

Living with Fear & Faith when You are the Problem – the Story of Jacob

Fear often come from things that are outside of our control.

- Storms, spiders, the dark, dying, etc.

But sometimes fear comes as a result of our own actions.

- Fear of getting a ticket when we chose to speed.
- Fear of losing our job when we chose to not put forth our best efforts.
- Fear of bodily harm when we chose to shoot off those fireworks.
- Fear of divorce when we continue to choose not to change or seek help.

Fear can be a good thing, when it leads to choosing the right things over the possibility of facing the consequences of choosing the wrong things!

But what do we do when we have already chosen the wrong thing(s) & as a result we are living with the fear & consequences of our actions every day?

Fear can be, & often is, the result of our past coming back to haunt us!

- Running into people we use to go to high school with.
- Living with the choices we made in previous dating relationships.
- Applying for a job when we have something on our record.

We often try to run from our past just to discover that we can't get away from it

Jacob's life was one of running, but his past would eventually catch up to him!

- He was on the run b/c he stole his brother Esau's birthright & blessing!
- He was on the run b/c he tricked his uncle Laban & left with everything!
- He was on the run b/c he didn't want to face God with the sin in his life!

The name Jacob in Hebrew means "to follow", "to be behind", "to supplant" Jacob was always running, but always behind, always trying to get ahead but doing so the wrong way, replacing God's way with his own way.

And Jacob literally found himself between "a rock and a hard place!" He tries to return to his home in Canaan – the place of God's blessing, but he ends up surrounded on every side by fear inducing forces.

- Laban was behind him, so he could not retreat! **Genesis 31:1-2, 17-31**
- Esau was in front of him so he could not advance! **Genesis 32:3-8, 13-21**
- God, and His angel army, were upon Him so he couldn't stay! **32:1-2**

What do you do when fear surrounds you & you don't know where to turn?

Jacob wrestled with God! **Genesis 32:22-31** Have we ever done this? Have we ever gone a few rounds with God? What was the result?

The result for Jacob was that obviously God won, but Jacob survived & was given a new name. He would no longer be Jacob but would be called Israel!

"For you have striven with God, & with men, and have prevailed." *Gen. 32:28*

With a new name came a new identity. With a new identity came a new life! Jacob's past was not removed, but his fear was turned to faith for the future

Genesis 33:1-4 – Jacob now leads the way towards his brother, trusting God by faith! No longer is he "Jacob", who follows out of fear, but "Israel" the one who leads out of the fear of the Lord – He steps out & walks by faith!

And God came through & reunited Jacob & Esau, and Jacob returns home!

How can we have a similar experience in our lives? If we have been headed in a certain direction (the wrong direction) for a long time, how do we change direction and start walking by faith, trusting in God & His provisions?

H.C. # 88, #89, #90 – Genuine repentance

The turning point for Jacob was the prayer he prayed in the climax of his fear. – **Genesis 32:9-12**

- Jacob acknowledged the God of Abraham & Isaac as his LORD!
- Jacob prays back the Word of God, trusting God's promise & provision!
- Jacob confesses his unworthiness before God!
- Jacob praises God for His steadfast love and faithfulness!
- Jacob gives his fear over to God concerning Esau!
- Jacob reaffirms God's promise & covenant with Abraham & descendants

We too can trust God by faith, despite our past failures, just as Jacob did! We too can have a new name, a new identity, a new way of life!

Even in our wrestling's with God, with others, and with our past – God's blessings and promises can be ours as well by faith in Jesus Christ!

We simply need to pray like Jacob prayed, and start living by faith, even amidst our fears!

"If our God is for us, who or what can stand against us" – Romans 8:31

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