

Holy Take Down!

Charlie Morgan was absolutely intimidating. He was supposed to weigh in at 140 pounds but there was no doubt in my mind that he was at least 180, maybe 200. Next to him, I looked like a toothpick. As he stepped to the scales, my heart leaped as the balance arm hit the top, and then it sank when the arm settled down to measure exactly 140 pounds. 'No way!' I thought.

As with many high school wrestlers, making weight was usually a big deal and I'd done every last minute trick to get in under the limit. At this point, however, I really wished I'd just eaten a couple of quarter-pounders cause this guy was definitely going to be pounding on me! Rumor had it that he was headed for the Olympics and looking at him, with more muscle in his ring finger than I had all together, I was sure it was true.

Wouldn't you know it, this was the one and only meet that both my mom and my girlfriend came to see. My life was flashing before my eyes as the referee called us to the center mat. I looked up to see them in the stands and rather than cheering they were shaking their heads and covering their eyes. Even they knew it was going to be brutal.

The whistle blew or someone said, "Wrestle!" It's all a blur. All I know was that in a couple of seconds Charlie was on the ground and I was on top! I shook my head in amazement as did Charlie. I'd scored two points with a take-down! But just as I was wondering if I was a better wrestler than I'd thought...WHAM! Then BOOM, BAM and CRUNCH! He settled the issue completely. I was pinned or rather spiked to the ground. I think they used a stretcher to remove my mangled body. I was SO out of my league with this guy.

So was Jacob. You recall the story from Genesis 32. But that's where the similarity ends. Unlike my own match which was over in an instant, Jacob wrestled with the Lord all night. And this is fascinating. Not that Jacob held on that long – rather that God let him. And so, in order to appreciate what happened that night, we will consider both grapplers.

Consider Jacob. What kind of a man grapples, literally, with God? When Abraham met Him, he fell before Him in worship and on another occasion prepared a feast. Isaac respectfully petitioned and worshipped. Jacob wrestled. Was it because he actually thought he could do a take-down on the Lord? Was he out of his mind? You might think that he was just scared and confused when this "Man" showed up. However, it's clear that he recognized Him for Hosea says that he wept, begging the Lord to bless him. Perhaps that is the key. Desperation.

Desperate men don't behave all that well sometimes. And recall that Jacob had been a wrestler since the womb. Life was one long fight for him. He wrestled with Esau, with Laban, with the Amorites (see Gen 48:22) and now with the Lord. Nowhere else in the Bible do we find such irreverence with one exception – Calvary. Jacob was actually fighting with his Creator to obtain a blessing.

But, you know, many of us fight with our God for a variety of reasons. Anger, bitterness, disillusionment... and we actually 'hang in there' thinking insanely that we can win. Like spoiled little children, we can think inwardly that if we fight with Him long enough, He'll repent and see it our way; then He'll bless us. To a certain extent, Israel has been doing this with their Savior for the last two millennia. They've been at war with God over their righteousness.

And the time of their wrestling is about to end. Pointing to these last days, Isaiah the prophet said,

Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her,

That her warfare is ended,

That her iniquity is pardoned;

For she has received from the

LORD's hand

Double for all her sins. (Isa 40:2)

You see, as with Jacob, He is about to humble them, to wound them in the time known as "Jacob's trouble".

Alas! for that day [is] great, so that none [is] like it: it [is] even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. (Jer 30:7)

Just as the Lord touched Jacob's thigh and wounded him, He will do the same to modern day Jacob – i.e. the nation of Israel – via the tribulation. After this touch, Jacob was a changed man and Israel will be changed as well. Jacob exclaimed that he had seen the face of God and lived. Likewise, very soon, the blinders will be taken off of the chosen remnant of Israel. Then, they will see Christ clearly and, as a consequence, live.

For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. (Rom 11:25)

But back to Jacob. He was at his wits end. In an effort to obey God and return to the promised land, he left the land of his uncle Laban where he'd lived for some 20 years. He was at this point a large family and prosperous, but the land of promise was still quite dangerous. His brother, he thought, might still want to kill him.

Then Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom. And he commanded them, saying, "Speak thus to my lord Esau, 'Thus your servant Jacob says: "I have dwelt with Laban

and stayed there until now. I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, and male and female servants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in your sight.'"

Then the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, "We came to your brother Esau, and he also is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him." So Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two companies. And he said, "If Esau comes to the one company and attacks it, then the other company which is left will escape."

Then Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the LORD who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you': I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant; for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two companies. Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me and the mother with the children. For You said, 'I will surely treat you well, and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.'"

So he lodged there that same night, and took what came to his hand as a present for Esau his brother: two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty milk camels with their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten foals. Then he delivered them to the hand of his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants, "Pass over before me, and put some distance between successive droves." And he commanded the first one, saying, "When Esau my brother meets you and

asks you, saying, 'To whom do you belong, and where are you going? Whose are these in front of you?' then you shall say, 'They are your servant Jacob's. It is a present sent to my lord Esau; and behold, he also is behind us.'" So he commanded the second, the third, and all who followed the droves, saying, "In this manner you shall speak to Esau when you find him; and also say, 'Behold, your servant Jacob is behind us.'" For he said, "I will appease him with the present that goes before me, and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me." So the present went on over before him, but he himself lodged that night in the camp. (Gen 32:3-21)

Jacob schemed and prayed; and prayed and schemed. He was "greatly afraid and distressed." After his last contingency was in place, he retired alone across the creek and hoped to get some sleep.

Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day.

This is so terse. Who started the tussle? Were any words exchanged? This is the only place in the Bible where this word 'wrestle' is used. It basically means to get dusty. So these grapplers weren't going at it Greco-Roman style. They were rolling around in the dirt and the dust was flying. It was a melee! Can you picture that?! God's Son getting filthy dirty in order to finally break through to Jacob.

But that's exactly what He did, didn't He? Jesus got dusty and dirty for us in order that He could save us.

...we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Cor 5:20,21)

What kind of God does that? He wrestles all night with us sometimes – through our darkest, most desperate times. With dust and dirt flying everywhere, He looks in our eyes and into our desperately wicked heart with patient love. Sometimes, He'll wound us for our own good – our walk will change. As amazing as it is to consider Jacob wrestling with God, it is even more so to ponder God wrestling with him. What kind of Savior does that? A true Savior. One Who will do what it takes to demonstrate His love.

The match was over when Jacob cried out with tears for a blessing.

Yes, he struggled with the Angel and prevailed;

He wept, and sought favor from Him.

He found Him in Bethel,

And there He spoke to us (Hos 12:4)

He was wounded; he received a new name and with it a new emerging godliness, and the sun was about to rise.

Have you struggled with God? Made your plans in desperation? The verses above say that as Jesus worked with Jacob, He spoke to us. He spoke of our desperate need and His relentless love.

Jacob had "power" with the Lord – he "prevailed" -- not because he mastered the Master, but rather because he simply held on. He fervently desired God's help and wouldn't let go.

Hold fast. Our power or standing before God is based upon our holding on to Jesus – that is, our faith in Him.

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast [our] profession. (Heb 4:14)

When the Esau's of this world approach, hold on to Jesus. When it's dark and you're alone, hold on to Jesus. When you're desperate for help, hold on to Jesus. It may cost you, it may even hurt. But hold on to Jesus.

He'll never let go of you.