

Let Jacob Fade

The only group of people in the Bible who actually make God sick are those who have shut Him out and yet pretend to believe. In speaking to them, Christ says that they, Laodiceans, don't even have a clue as to their true condition and it's evident that they simply don't care. See Revelation 3:14-20.

Now, you yourself may have doubts or fears; you may not feel particularly 'godly' or 'good'. You may have unanswered questions or real hang-ups that you think you must clear up first before approaching or knowing God. You may have run from the 'confrontation', worked hard to feel better about yourself, or wandered aimlessly and fearfully from one bad situation to a worse one. Yet, leading us to the honest confrontation with our true condition is what God does for all His children by His Spirit.

For this reason, I love the many lessons evident in the life of Jacob. Like all of us, he had to learn to submit and trust God contrary to a very strong sin-nature. He also had to learn to follow his Shepherd rather than

BE the shepherd. Both of these were literally life-long courses in God's school.

And God took care to lay it out for us in His Word for Jacob's life is recorded in the Bible from babe in the womb to his burial and beyond. If you've read this story, you know he was indeed a "heel snatcher" which is what he was named – a stubbornly self-centered deceiver who was not always so sure about God. He looked out for and depended only on himself – an attitude that put him at odds with his brother, father and father-in-law, and led to great division in his family among both wives and children.

Nevertheless, he is the only person in the Bible to literally fight hand to hand with a heavenly being and to be literally wounded by a divine touch. What a character!

And, like it or not, he represents you and me.

Perhaps the greatest lesson his life offers is one that requires a bit of study – you see, it's not obvious in the

casual reading of the scripture. Let me explain.

Recall, Jacob the name means "heel snatcher" and it did typify the character of the man. Nevertheless, God had a plan for him that included a marvelous change. It wasn't a change of health or wealth that God had in mind but rather a complete change in the man himself – his condition. This came to light when He gave him a new name, Israel, which means "governed by God".

You see, the name Jacob symbolically represents the old man, the carnal man, the fleshly sin-nature. But, Israel signifies the new man, the godly man, dedicated to and in harmony with God. Now, here is where the study or exploration of the Word reveals more...

Beginning with his birth and up unto his 'confrontation' with God Almighty (in Genesis 32), he is referred to solely as Jacob, and that's reasonable since all he did to that point in time displayed his scheming, deceitful, self-trusting fleshly nature. However, as he prepared to face (and potentially run away from) the

brother, Esau, who had sworn to kill him, God put a stop to all his running period. It was the middle of the night. Jacob had done all he could think of to prepare to escape and to placate his brother who was headed his way with 400 armed men. His little Jacob-mind had been in overdrive and he was likely exhausted.

But God's 'ambassador' showed up that night and incredibly, Jacob – yes Jacob, began to fight with him! In the process of wrestling with this angelic messenger, the Lord displayed a desperately needed revelation – Jacob NEEDED **Gods** help. The prophet Hosea (Hos 12:4) says that he cried out, imploring God for merciful help and that's when God changed his name to Israel. We should note that this wasn't his first encounter with God (that happened years earlier at Bethel), but it was his first submission to Him.

Nevertheless, his 'old man' – his 'Jacob' nature -- continued to dominate his life until in chapter 35 of Genesis, he headed back to Bethel, the place where he first encountered God. There he built an altar, there his beloved

'nanny', Deborah died, but there also, God bestowed the divine inheritance upon him as He had done for Abraham and Isaac.

For you and I, that pictures a return to the origins of our own relationship with God -- the Cross of Calvary, the resurrection, and utter trust in Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, and this is key. A study of the number of times he is referred to as Jacob and as Israel reveals a wonderful picture of spiritual growth. Over time, Jacob ultimately faded away, and in the end, it was Israel – the character of one who is truly governed by God – which came to dominate. In fact, the last mention of him in Genesis is as Israel.

For us, the message is clear – our own Jacob-nature has to fade away and indeed it will as we choose, over and over, to yield our heart, our way, to God. Don't be discouraged by 'Jacob' hanging around. His diminishing has its ups and downs, and is truly a life-long process. But **God** is faithful, Who will do it. He's the One who transforms us. If you have not yet confronted the reality of your true condition, do it now. Wrestle with God if you have to, but don't be like the majority who

simply shuffle through this life and then tumble into the utter darkness of hell forever. God won't keep you from that IF it's what you desire, but it's not His desire.

And if you do know Christ as your Lord, let Jacob FADE. Be transformed by the continual renewing of your soul in Him! Rom 12:2