

Go All Out to Win Those You Have Wronged

Genesis 32:13-21

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Introduction:

Last week in our sermon series from Genesis, we came to chapter 32 where we have the story of Jacob meeting up with Esau which runs to end of chapter 33.

- There are a number of things that are brought out in this story.
 - You may have noticed that I have not been rushing through Genesis.
 - Often, I have preached several sermons on one story...
 - My goal has been to focus on one central point at a time rather than trying to cover a whole episode in one sermon.

Last week, in coming to chapter 32, we began looking at this account about Jacob having to face Esau, his hostile brother!

- Jacob had left home 20 years before this to escape Esau's anger, and now we have the suspense-filled record of his meeting with him.
- We focused in particular on how God stirs up prayer in us in such times of distress.
 - We saw how the LORD (in His providence) gave Jacob two things that triggered prayer...
 - He gave him a vision of angels that reminded him that heaven was busy looking after him;
 - And He revealed to Jacob the real danger that he was in when his servants told him that Esau was coming to meet him for a regiment of 400 men when Jacob had no means with which to defend himself!
- We saw how Jacob was indeed stirred up to pray—a wonderful prayer—a prayer that we looked at as a model prayer for us in our times of distress!
 - We saw how he pled with the Lord on the basis of the covenant that the Lord had made with him and his fathers—trusting in the relationship that God had already established with them as the foundation of His coming kingdom...
 - And we saw how he marvellously confessed that all that he had received from God was of His mercy, not of his merit...
 - And then we saw how he asked the LORD to deliver him the hand of his brother Esau, claiming God's promise of protection for him.
- What comfort we can have if we are reconciled to God in Jesus Christ to come to Him when our relationship with Him is threatened.
 - We know that He will hear us and will not allow our enemies, who are much stronger than we are, to either draw us away or drive us away from Him.
 - That is the sum of what we looked at last week as we began looking at this fearful meeting with Esau.

Today, as we move on in this story of Jacob, I want focus on how, besides prayer, we are called by God to go out of our way to make peace with an estranged brother.

- We are to make reconciliation a top priority!
- This is especially the case when we have wronged our brother (as was the case with Jacob)...
- We are to do all that we can lawfully do to make right the wrongs that we have done.

We have already read Matthew 5:21-26 this morning, where our LORD Jesus speaks about this duty; and here in Genesis 32, we have an example of Jacob doing this.

- Our text today is from Genesis 32 verses 13-21, but I am going to read from the beginning of the chapter to give you the context...
- So please give attention to God's Word, beginning in Genesis 32:1.
 - This is the very Word of God.

Gen 32:1-21: So Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. ² When Jacob saw them, he said, "This *is* God's camp." And he called the name of that place Mahanaim. ³ Then Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom. ⁴ 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. ⁵ 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." ' " ⁶ 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." ⁷ 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. ⁸ And he said, "If Esau comes to the one company and attacks it, then the other company which is left will escape." ⁹ 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': ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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. ¹² 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.' " ¹³ So he lodged there that same night, and took what came to his hand as a present for Esau his brother: ¹⁴ two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, ¹⁵ thirty milk camels with their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten foals. ¹⁶ 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." ¹⁷ 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?' ¹⁸ 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.' " ¹⁹ 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; ²⁰ 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." ²¹ So the present went on over before him, but he himself lodged that night in the camp.

May the LORD add His rich blessing to the reading of His holy Word.

As you can see, Jacob goes to great lengths to appease his estranged brother with a gift.

- We don't have to guess what his intentions are—we are told what he was thinking in verse 20 where 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."

- The word he uses here that is translated *appease* (kaw-far) is the word that is most commonly translated *atone*—the word that is used to speak of offering a sacrifice to God to atone for sin.
- The word means *to cover* because an atonement was a way of covering for the wrongs that you have done.
 - Our sins are atoned for, or covered before God, by the blood of Christ, but in our relationships with each other, we sometimes need to atone by making restitution of some kind.

While there are some expositors who see what Jacob does here in a negative light—

- that he is not trusting God to protect him, but resorting to his old ways of manipulation...
 - I agree with those who see this as a virtuous act that we ought to imitate.
- And let me add that even if Jacob is wavering in his trust of God here,
 - that does not change the fact that it was his duty, just as it is our duty, to do what he could to make peace with the one he had sinned against...
 - We know that he was motivated by fear, but even Jesus advises us to agree with our adversary quickly lest we end up being punished in prison.
 - It just helps to be all the more earnest about fulfilling our duty to make peace when the one we have wronged has the power to harm us!
 - So whatever Jacob's motives may be, we have an excellent example of one going to great effort to right the wrongs that he has done to his brother!
 - That means that there is much helpful instruction for us as it is certain that we will sin against others as we go along in life...

I. The first thing you need to do (if you are going to make restitution) is admit that you have sinned against your brother.

A. That is a very difficult thing to do.

1. The first reaction of almost all of us is to defend ourselves—to deny that we have sinned!
 - This is especially the case if we are earnestly trying to serve the Lord.
 - Here we are, trying to live a holy life in the world, and someone is offended with us!
 - a. The first thing we want to do is blame the other person.
 - Sometimes, it may be that they *are* unjustly offended.
 - That was certainly the case with Jesus, and He tells us that if we serve Him faithfully, people will be unjustly offended with us.
 - And as with Him, it will often be religious people that take the most offense—if they are works oriented, the cross is very offensive to them.
 - b. But there will be plenty of times when we, at least partly, are in the wrong.
 - And you know as well as I do how hard it is to admit it!
 - You want to explain why you did what you did—
 - You want to justify your actions.
 - You want to minimise the wrong in what you have done.
 - You want to gather people around you that will agree with you.

- I remember one time when I spoke impatiently around the table and my dear wife gently pointed it out to me.
 - My first reaction was to deny that I done this.
 - I then asked my children who were sitting around the table, one by one, if they thought I had been impatient in my speech...
 - Each in turn meekly nodded that, yes, they thought I had.
 - I had to give up and ask forgiveness!
2. There are certain factors that can make it even more difficult than it already is to admit that you have sinned...
- a. For example, if the person you sinned against is someone you don't naturally get along with very well...
- Perhaps you find them insensitive, or maybe they seem proud (and perhaps they are proud).
 - Maybe they are someone who is not so impressed with you either!
 - In our vanity, we often have better opinions of those who have the best opinions of us.
 - Maybe it is just that you don't have similar interests.
 - Or maybe they do things that annoy you.
 - And maybe they are not a very godly person—a whiner, a profane person.
- 1) All that plays into the equation.
- It is quite intolerable to you to think of admitting to a person like that that you have wronged them when—they bother you so much...
 - Don't you have a right to make them unhappy occasionally when they so often are a cause your unhappiness?
 - Now of course such an attitude is a problem in itself—but it also adds to the problem of admitting the wrong you have done.
- 2) Certainly, Jacob had this problem with Esau.
- Esau was a profane man—we are told that—he did not value the things of God's kingdom—only what he could see...
 - And he and Jacob had rubbed each other the wrong way from their youth—they had very different interests—
 - Jacob being a shepherd and Esau being a hunter.
 - Jacob being a contemplative man, and Esau being a very active man.
 - Jacob being a schemer, and Esau being straightforward and open.
- b. And it is even harder to admit your sin against your brother when he has made a big deal about it...
- 1) When he has over-reacted to it...blown it out of proportion—gotten more offended than you think he should have...
- If you admit it when he is done that, it feels like you are lending credence to his exaggeration—accepting his view of things.
 - It makes you want to say, “Okay, I sinned against you, but it was not nearly as bad as you say it was!”

- 2) And indeed, Esau certainly had over-reacted to Jacob's sin.
 - He accused Jacob of taking away his birthright when in fact Jacob had purchased it from him—in an agreement.
 - Albeit he exploited Esau's weakness—Esau wanted the stew that Jacob was cooking and Jacob knew that if Esau wanted something, he really wanted it—and he knew his brother was impetuous, so he seized on that weakness and took advantage of him...
 - It was a lowdown thing to do, but he did not really take it from him, he purchased it from him.
 - And then Jacob deceived their father Isaac and took the blessing that his father intended for Esau!
 - It was the double portion of the inheritance and the headship of the family that was generally given to the firstborn...
 - And you will remember how Jacob pretended to be Esau and deceived his blind father to get the blessing for himself.
 - Again, it was a lowdown rotten thing to do...
 - but Esau definitely over-reacted in wanting to kill Jacob for this—and Jacob had heard that Esau wanted to kill him!
 - That, of course, is why he is afraid of Esau as he returns to the land, especially after hearing that Esau is coming to meet him with four hundred men!
- 3) The last thing you want to do when someone has over-exaggerated your sin is to own up to it!
 - But that is exactly what Jesus tells you do to before you can think about walking in harmony with Him and our Father in heaven!
 - “If your brother has something against you, go to him and be reconciled!”

B. Failure to admit that you have done wrong is one of the greatest barriers to peace in the church and in the home—and in the world for that matter.

1. I have seen so many fractured relationships, and the reason they are fractured is because nobody wants to own up to their sin.
 - Sometimes it is the sin of falsely accusing their brother or blaming him.
 - Often it is the denial of real wrongs that have been done—either by saying the wrong was justified or just by avoiding it completely.
2. It is so sad to see ungodly division and the disturbance of the peace that we ought to be able to enjoy as God's people.
 - How often have churches divided because people are too proud to admit that they have done wrong.
 - Even pastors, who ought to lead the way in confessing their sins, are too full of themselves to admit that they have sinned.
 - How many marriages are spoiled by this very thing!
 - How many troubled young adults whose testimony is that they have never once heard their father admit that he has sinned against them...
 - that he has never once asked them for forgiveness.

II. But really, it shouldn't be such a difficult thing for you to admit your wrongs if you are believer.

A. Christians, of all people, should delight both in forgiveness and confessing our sins.

1. We are they who have seen that sin has ruined us, that it has cut us off from God.
 - a. If you are a real Christian, the Holy Spirit has made that very clear to you.
 - The Spirit brings God's word into the roots of you—to your heart, and makes you see that you are a sinner without hope.
 - You know that your sin is such that you can't even do what Jacob wanted to do with Esau and make atonement for it—to make restitution to him.
 - You realise that there is no way that you could make restitution to God for what you have done—He is God—and you have rejected Him!
 - b. But if you are a Christian, you are also someone who knows that God sent Jesus to make restitution for the sins of His people!
 - And you have come to Him that you might become one of His people!
 - You come gladly confessing your sins because Jesus has made atonement for them and promises you forgiveness if you trust in Him.
 - You have no reason but your pride to deny your sins...and to think of having them pardoned is enough to overcome your pride!
2. You know the pleasure and the value of having your sins forgiven!
 - You know the joy of having the burden of your guilt rolled away upon Christ.
 - You know what it is to be freed from the fear of judgement and wrath.
 - You know what it is to be reconciled to God and to live in sweet communion with Him as your loving heavenly Father,
 - And to be nurtured by Him and lead along by Jesus Christ—and to live in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- All this ought to make confessing your sins a much more agreeable thing to do!
 - Unless you have fallen out of fellowship with God and have forgotten how sweet it is to walk in communion with Him...
3. The last thing you want is to allow unconfessed sin (or anything else) to spoil your relationship with God.
 - Oh, I know—
 - We often do lose sight of these things...
 - But when you come to your senses—when you stop and think about it...
 - You know that there is nothing better than to live in communion with God, and it is not worth it to you to let unconfessed sin spoil that communion.

TRANS> And so, you ought to be familiar with confessing your sins, and familiar with the benefits of doing so...and of having your sins atoned for by Christ...

- And that should make it much easier for you to confess your sins to your brother and to make things right with him.

B. And let me tell you, Jesus makes it perfectly clear that if you are not reconciled with your brother (as far as it depends on you), you are not reconciled with God!

1. This is a major theme in the Bible.
 - a. We read the passage in Matthew 5 where Jesus said that you shouldn't even bother to come and worship God if your brother has something against you.
 - You will just be going through the motions!
 - You won't be connecting with God! You won't be hearing His voice and He won't be hearing yours either!
 - Jesus says, **Mt 5:24: leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.**
 - b. Later on in the same sermon (in Mat 6:15), Jesus warns you that if you refuse to forgive your brother, your heavenly Father won't forgive you!
 - That is scary language—but Jesus means it!
 - You can't be right with God—you can't have communion with God—until you first receive your brother.
 - His sins against you are nothing compared to your sins against God!
 - It shows that you do not know God's forgiveness if you do not forgive your brother.
 - c. John, the disciple who was the most intimate with Jesus of all the disciples, echoes Jesus' teaching about this when he says,
 - **1 John 4:20-21: If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? ²¹ And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.**
 - This is serious—
 - It calls into question your relationship with God if you are against your brother!
2. So here is even more incentive to do what you can to live at peace with your brother.
 - a. It ought to make it a whole lot easier to go on and admit the wrongs that you have done when you realise that your relationship with God cannot be right till you do!
 - If your relationship with the Lord is all dried up, this might very well be the reason for it!
 - b. Don't let your silly pride keep you from walking with the LORD!
 - Why would you hold on to something that is so harmful?
 - You could know the joy of communion with God!
 - That should make it easy to own up to your sin.
3. Jacob realised that he could not have communion with God until he made things right with Esau.
 - a. God had called him to live in the land of Canaan.
 - God had called his father Abraham to this land, and Isaac had never left it.
 - Jacob had left it because of his estrangement from Esau.
 - But this land was the place where God had promised to raise up His righteous kingdom through the descendants of Jacob.

- And God had called Jacob to return to it, and had promised to bless him if he did!
 - And more than anything, Jacob wanted that blessing!
- b. But right now, Esau stood between Jacob and the kingdom of God—between him and that Land.
 - We could put it like this—he could not live in the kingdom of God unless he made right the wrongs he had done to his brother Esau.
 - With Jacob, these spiritual truths had a corresponding physical reality.
 - Esau wanted to kill Jacob; therefore he could not live in the Land until he made things right with Esau.
 - The physical and spiritual are often joined like this in the Old Testament.
 - Entering the kingdom, which is truly a spiritual matter, had a corresponding physical component joined to it...
 - You have to relocate—to go to the Promised Land where God was properly worshipped.
 - Later on, there were priests and sacrifices, and kings raised up who were types of Christ.
 - This helped both them and us to understand better what is required of us.
 - We worship in spirit and truth today, so the physical component is not as prominent for us,
 - but we learn through the history of the Old Testament.
- c. So you see the principle here, don't you?
 - You can't live in God's kingdom unless you first reconcile with your brother.
 - If you are going to live in the kingdom, you have to deal with your brother first, just like Jacob had to deal with Esau.
 - And really, sometimes, this does have a physical component for us.
 - You are unable to join the church because there is someone there that you have sinned against—and you refuse to deal with it...
 - You are physically cut off from God's people and from God Himself until you make peace, just as Jacob was until he made things right with Esau.
 - This physical component is not always there of course—you can be estranged from people and still go to church with them...
 - you can be estranged from your husband or your wife or children and still live with them too...
 - But you cannot have true communion with God unless you are willing to right your wrongs against these people.
 - You cannot live in communion with God until you first reconcile with your brother.

TRANS> And that should give you all the incentive you need to act—to do whatever you need to do to reconcile with the brother you have sinned against!

III. Sometimes you must go to great lengths to make peace with your brother!

A. Sometimes it becomes clear that you have to do more than you have done.

1. Jacob had taken the first steps to reconcile with Esau already.
 - a. As we saw last week, he had sent word to Esau to tell him that he was coming.
 - This showed how much Jacob had grown!
 - He was one to avoid anything that was hard, but he knew that he could not just slip back into Canaan and hope Esau would not notice him.
 - And we saw that he had also hinted to Esau through these messengers that he was not going to try to take dominion over him.
 - Yes, Jacob was appointed to be the head of the family in place of his father Isaac...
 - And yes, Jacob was given a double portion of the inheritance...
 - But when Jacob sent the first messengers to Esau to tell him he was coming, he made it clear that he was not interested in making these claims.
 - As to claiming lordship, he told the messengers to say, “Thus your servant Jacob says...” and he told them to tell Esau that he had said “I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favour in your sight.”
 - This is not the language of one who is coming to claim the place of lordship; he sounds more like a vassal!
 - And as to claiming the double portion of the inheritance, Jacob includes in the message the fact that God has made him very wealthy.
 - The implication is that he does not need his father’s inheritance.
 - b. But when the messengers returned, it was clear that Jacob had not done enough to appease Esau.
 - They reported that Esau was coming to meet him—with 400 men!
 - Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed!
 - He divided his family into two groups, and then he took another very important step to reconciliation...
 - Something that we have not seen him do much...
 - He prayed an earnest, heartfelt, promise claiming, humble prayer to God who had made a covenant with him.
- You remember all of this from last week—this is what he had done to make peace...
2. But my brothers and sisters, this was not enough!
 - I know it sounds strange to say that prayer is not enough, but when you need to make restitution, it is not!
 - Children, if a Christian kid in your neighbourhood stole your bicycle, and he knew that you knew it,
 - And he came over to play and acted like nothing was wrong and you said, “Hey, but what about my bicycle,” and he said,

- “Oh, it’s okay, I prayed to God that you would not be angry with me about that anymore.”
 - What would you say?
 - You’d say something like,
 - “Hey pal, I am perfectly willing to forgive you, but first you need to bring my bike back!”
 - His prayers, however good they may be, are not adequate to restore his relationship with you!
 - He needs to make restitution.
3. Jacob realises that he needs to do more than he had done.
- a. Did he really think that Esau would trust him when he had been such a stinking twister—such a Jacob?
 - He wasn’t about to walk into another one of Jacob’s tricks.
 - That’s why he musters 400 fighting men.
 - He has no idea how many Jacob may have with him so he is not going to take any chances!
 - b. So Jacob sets out, not to trick Esau this time, but to prepare a gift for him!
 - He is going to address all of his energy not to tricking him, but to making restitution that will win him.
- B. My brothers and sisters, do not be stingy when it comes to making restitution.
1. Your goal is to win your brother—make it a priority to win them!
 - If you took their bicycle,
 - don’t just return the bicycle, but throw in a new tee shirt or a new basketball—something you know they would like—just to make sure they know you are sincere!
 2. Jesus tells you not to be stingy about this...
 - When He tells you to go to your brother in Matthew 5, he adds,
 - in verse 25: **Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.**
 - He is saying to make things right with him on the way to court before you get in trouble...
 - In other words, the principle is, appease him before it leads to more trouble—before he takes you court, beats you up, destroys your reputation—whatever—
 - Go all out to appease him...to make atonement for what you have done.
 - Remember how we saw that this is what Jacob was doing with his gift to Esau—in verse 20, he uses the language of atonement—that he hopes to appease him with a present?
 - This is a matter about which it is too important to be stingy!
 - There will be consequences for you if you do not make diligent effort to reconcile with your brother.

3. And you see that Jacob prepares a great gift! He is not stingy at all!
 - a. A gift of 580 animals!
 - This was a huge gift!
 - It was a thoughtful gift as Esau, being a hunter, may not have had regular flocks...
 - And thirty of these were camels nursing their colts—thirty camels and thirty colts—in a day when camels were greatly prized!
 - b. And Jacob did not pick out the weak ones either—
 - In verse 13, it says that he took the ones that came to his hand—he took them randomly.
 - c. And he even thought about how to deliver this gift to Esau—
 - He sent the animals in a succession of droves—one after another so that as Esau drew nearer, he received more and more gifts with a message of reconciliation each time...
 - With each drove, the servants were to say of these animals, **“They are your servant Jacob’s. It is a present sent to my lord Esau; and behold, your servant Jacob is behind us.”**
- C. The fruits of making restitution are sweet—very sweet indeed!
1. Chapter 33 tells us what happened!
 - By God’s grace, Jacob’s plan worked—
 - We will have to save the details for another sermon—a sermon to show you the beautiful fruits of restitution...
 - And we will have to look at another barrier that is very much tied in with Jacob’s sins against Esau that Jacob had to overcome before we do that.
 - But if we peek ahead, we see that Esau is melted by Jacob’s efforts!
 - When he finally sees his brother after all these droves of gifts,
 - bowing repeatedly before him, unarmed, there with his wives and children,
 - Esau is so moved that runs to his brother to embrace him—
 - He kisses him repeatedly and weeps!
 2. Indeed, Jacob has prevailed again, but in an entirely different way!
 - This time, not in a way that drives a wedge between he and his brother,
 - not in a way that forces Jacob out of the Land of Promise,
 - but in winning his brother’s friendship and in opening the way so that the Land is no longer barred to him.
 - Now, instead of walking away with a double inheritance that he can’t enjoy, Jacob is able to receive the kingdom that the LORD has promised him...
 - He is able, as it were, to enter the kingdom because he has reconciled with his brother!
 - He has chosen the best part!

3. And what about you?
- What is more important to you?
 - Beating out your brother, getting your way at his expense?
 - Or winning his heart—being kind and gracious to him?
 - loving him as Jesus loves you?
 - Do you remember what Jesus said He came to do?
 - He came to serve us.
 - He came to give His life for us so that we could be reconciled.
 - If you want to be His disciple, then you must learn to delight in being a servant to others...
 - Not just getting along with them—not just being fair with them...
 - But like Jacob, coming to serve them—coming to be a blessing to them.
 - Do you not remember?
 - That is what this kingdom that Jacob was receiving was all about!
 - It was a kingdom that was to serve the world!
 - It is a kingdom that is to pour itself out to win the world to God!
 - Jesus leads the way and we are to follow Him!
 - You cannot enter His kingdom until you are ready to serve.
 - That is what His kingdom is all about.
 - Has Jesus won your heart with His gift?
 - Is His kingdom worth everything to you?
 - Come and serve—you will fail, we will all fail, but He will never fail us.