Power that transforms

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[0:00] I would like you to turn with me this morning again to Genesis 32 and verse 24. We resume our subject of the power that transforms.

And that power comes with a person. We cannot know the power of God divorced from God Himself any more than we can know a blessing apart from God Himself.
There is always one fears in our hearts the danger that we want God's power and do not want God Himself.
Or that we wish God's blessing and yet do not wish what that must carry with it.
The presence of the one who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. The power of God never comes apart from God.
[1:16] Therefore, the power that transforms involves encounter. We looked at that yesterday from verse 24 in this chapter. And Jacob was left alone and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

Jacob came to grips with God. Or I would much rather put it the other way. Jacob was left alone. He didn't seek this encounter.
He had sought God in prayer. And it would seem that he thought that he had finished his transactions with God for the night.
He was left alone and there wrestled a man with him. And wherever there is saving encounter with God, that saving encounter is always, I believe, on the initiator of God.
God was suddenly there with the man who had been alone. And God laid hold of him. He came to grips with Jacob.
[2:27] And inevitably, when God comes to grips with our soul, that soul must come to grips with God. Let's go on today to verses 25 and 26 here and see how encounter involves something else.

If it is going to be saving encounter, sanctifying encounter. It must involve enlightenment. It must involve a revelation of who and what God is.
And it is only in the light of the knowledge of who and what God is that a sinner comes to a realistic understanding of who and what he is.
And these verses tell us how Jacob was wrestled to the place where he was willing to look at himself in the light of the nature and the character of the God who is perfect in holiness.
And who says, Be ye perfect, for without holiness no man shall see God. Whatever else you have, if encountered with God and the gospel is not bringing you to holiness, then your encounter is not saving encounter.
[4:15] And when he saw, that is, when the angel of the covenant, when God saw, God in the passion of his Son, in pre-incarnation experience, when he saw that he prevailed not against him, when he saw that Jacob hung on and wrestled on, he touched the hollow of his thigh.

And the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint as he wrestled with him. And he said, The angel still let me go for the daybreaker. And he, Jacob now, Jacob said, I will not let thee go.
I will not let thee go except thou bless me. The power that transforms encounter and encounter involving enlightenment.
enlightenment. And I want to try and trace out the process of enlightenment in this experience of Jacob. Trace it out just through these two verses.
And first of all, I'm just going to give you a head so that we'll hold on to what was happening and the way, the order in which it happened. God is a God of order.
[5:39] And when he deals with us, the scripture teaches us, when he deals with us, he deals with us in an orderly, understandable way.

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And the first thing I want us to see here is this, the tenacity of the faith of Jacob. The tenacity of his faith.
When God saw that he prevailed not against him. Now there's something to admire, isn't it? For years I read this and I only admired it.
I want us to pause here. What a wonderful thing a tenacious faith is. A faith that will wrestle on through the long moments and hours of darkness.
the older one grows in the following of Jesus. The more one is conscious of the difficulties that hang around a life of real prayer.
[6:45] One of the greatest difficulties of that whole experience of a prayer life I believe is this, having the faith to persevere when things are dark.

It is easy to pray when things are light and when your heart is warm and when you're enjoying what you think is the blessing of God.
This man hung on exerting himself through the long hours of darkness. holiness. And I think that the thing that stands out here is this, the persistence with which he hung on to God and with which he wrestled with God.
Now that persistence is I think the persistence of faith. There's not much doubt about it. Jacob is concerned to have the blessing that has been covenanted to him by a covenant making and a covenant keeping God.
That comes out from the prayer which we read yesterday. He prayed, going back to verse 9, reminding God that he was the God of his father Abraham, the God of covenant promise and the God who had dealt with himself earlier.
[8:15] That's why I know this is not the conversion experience of David. The Lord who said unto me, Return unto thy country, to thy kindred, I will deal well with thee.

And he goes on and there's a danger I think from verse 11 that we might feel that Jacob was praying out of unnatural carnal fear.
Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau. And he had been driven away from home because of the hatred of Esau. For I fear him lest he will come and smite me and the mother with the children.
But we must not forget verse 12 because verse 12 shows us that the faith of Jacob is concerned not with his own heart or the heart of his wives or of his children, merely.
He is concerned with the promise that from Abraham his father and from his own loins there will be raised up a seed.
[9:21] The messianic promise. Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good and make thy seed as the sand of the sea which cannot be numbered for multitude. And the language takes us back to Genesis 12 and Genesis 17.

The covenant promise with Abraham. So Jacob's faith is concerned for the covenant promise of God not just for immediate disaster from the hand of Esau.
So there is, you see, there's something to admire here. There's the tenacity of faith. I wonder if your faith reaches out with pain and concern over the glory of God and the glory of his covenant when you see the masses despise them and when you wonder if the day will ever come when the promise of the covenant the whole earth shall be filled with his glory.
I wonder if there's a pain in your soul and you hold on to God in the dark for the coming of that day and the fulfilling of that promise. God's glory and the good of the gospel and the salvation of our loved ones.
I think we're also in danger.
[11:04] Wrestling. Come back to wrestling. when he saw that he prevailed not against them. What happens in wrestling there's the encounter as we were saying yesterday of physical force coming to grips of two men.

But underneath that there is something else. It's not merely just a physical tangible encounter. It is the meeting of two wills and it is the attempt of one will to bend another will to its purpose.
That happens in every contest of wrestling between men. And the only way that it comes out into visibility is in the energy of the conflict in which they're engaged.
But the deeper conflict is the conflict between mind and will. You know there's always the danger that we impose and in our prayer agonize in order to impose our will upon the sovereign will of God.

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Let me ask you a question. What do you think prayer is? Is prayer the attempt of the believer to bend God to his will?
[12:33] To listen to many people praying that's what you would think prayer was. And to listen to some men preach about prayer you would think that was what prayer was.

My friend prayer is in fact if we had time to go into it we could show it we won't. Prayer is the very opposite. Prayer is putting oneself into the hands of God until you are brought to the place in which the Son himself stood when he said Father I will nevertheless not my will but thine be done and God has handled you until you are saying yes Father it is good even when there's pain in it.
And that's why I think we have to go on still holding with these words when he saw that he prevailed not against him to say that we see not only the tenacity of faith but the treachery of the flesh.
The coming into the relationship between the soul and God of that which is carnal and unspiritual.
Jacob was having to learn a hard lesson and it was this that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but spiritual and only when they are spiritual will they be mighty to the pulling down of the strongholds of Satan.
[14:15] One of the things that has blighted the church of God in Scotland and England and Wales for a hundred years is the attempt to further the faith in the carnality of the flesh.

If the preaching of the word won't do it and if God is not there in the power of the Holy Ghost then we'll bring in entertainment and fifty years of entertainment has emptied their churches.
There was persistence but my friend there's something else that we have to read into this. There's resistance that said yesterday that God laid hold of Jacob in order to wrestle him into a place of light.
A place of light is dangerous. The flesh doesn't like it. The thoughts are brought out. The mortals of the heart and the actions of the life.
One of the last things we'll do and I'm talking now about Christians is allow God to bring us into the place where his light shines into our hearts.
[15:32] Jacob resists it. And you know Jacob was terrific at resisting. He had been well schooled in the theology that would further the faith in the ways of the flesh.

And I want to try and do it quite quickly but take you back and illustrate that. He's refusing to be dragged out into the light. Yes, let God work, he's saying, but let God work in my way.
Bless me here in the dark. God won't bless in the dark. God will only bless in the light.
Jacob had learned from his mother and his mother acted in the very way that Jacob is acting now.
She had acted in the power of carnal wisdom in order to fulfill the covenant promise of God.
[16:44] I determined, said an apostle, taught as God teaches, I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Not with the words of man's wisdom. then will we learn. Go back with me. Genesis 25. And verses 27 to 34 and we've got the transaction of the birthright.
And this is critical to an understanding of the life of Jacob, Isaac, Rebecca, and Esau. Genesis 25 and verses 27.
The boys grew. Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field. I want us to pause there and say there is only one other man in the whole of scripture who has spoken of as a hunter and he is an evil man, Nabal.
and that teaches us something about the character of Esau. Isaac, I want you to notice this particularly, Isaac loved Esau.
[18:05] Isaac, if you compare Hebrews 12, Hebrews 11, and Romans 9, I'm not going to do it, if you compare these two, it's quite clear that Isaac was in on the fact that God had said to Rebekah the elder shall serve the younger.

That is that the Bithyrite was covenanted not through Esau and not to Esau but through Jacob and to Jacob.
And Isaac knew that. And we read here that Isaac loved Esau. Why? This is why he said yesterday he was a bit of a glutton. He loved Esau because he did eat of his venison.
Rebekah could never forget the promise of God and she loved Jacob. She loved Jacob because she loved God and God's promise.
Let's not forget that. I've sometimes heard true Rebekah dealt with pretty harshly and pooped. she's to be blamed partly she's to be blamed because of her love to God and her longing to see God's promise fulfilled.

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[19:26] And that's not bad blame. I wish we could blame a lot of our Christians with the same sort of zeal as Rebekah had. Even although in places it was zeal without knowledge and wisdom. That by the way.

And then we come to this transaction. Verse 30 Jesus said to Jacob feed me I pray with that same red.
One pottage is not in the Hebrew and it's a pity it's here at all. Pottage we learn from kings was the food in which prophets were fed.
I don't know exactly what sort of stuff it was but that's what Rebekah was feeding Jacob on. And you know this Esau didn't even know what it was called. Feed me with that red stuff he said.
And then he said I am faint. And then Jacob came in. His mother had been talking to Jacob I suppose and saying now son you're the one that God is going to bless.
[20:29] You're going to be the minister in this family. You're going to be the big man with God.
And then Jacob thought well I better give God a hand.

He said Esau he said sell me this day I did it. I want you to notice something and this is very solemn. Jacob Jacob is offering to purchase something that God has given him for nothing.
And that is the attempt of every soul who seeks to be saved with a doctrine of works. Whether you're seeking God's blessing oh yes we'll get the gifts of the spirit if we do this or that or the other and you want to work your way into a wonderful experience and be a big man with God and with men.
Rubbish. We are justified freely by his grace. Don't get sort of shunted off to one side with strange teachings about the doctrine of the spirit in these days.
There is the old charter cartacism puts the basics very simply for us. The only redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ.
[21:46] Not the Holy Spirit. He's our sanctifier and we praise God for his work. He's our quickener. Yes, and he will give us gifts. But he will do these things by making Jesus glorious and large in our eyes.

And be weary of any teaching that exalts the Holy Spirit over the Lord Jesus. Because the Spirit's chief function is to take them the things which are mine and show them to you for he shall glorify me.
Good if it's doing that. We'll leave that there now. Come back to Jacob and Esau. Jacob said now, Samir Bistri.
And Esau starts thinking, Oh yes, Esau. Here I am. I'm at the point to die and what profit shall this persuade do me. And I used to think, Boy, what a day Esau had in the mountains.
He came back and he was so tired that he was just conking out. And again, let me say this is rubbish. This is not what it means.
[23:04] A day in the mountains, two days in the mountains, three days in the mountains would not leave a man like Esau on the point of death. And there was no need for him to be hungry for there was food in his father's house.

What is he saying? He is saying life is pretty short. And what used to me is a birthright that's centred on a promise that looks as if it will never be fulfilled or to put it otherwise.
Life's too short to be concerned with the promises of God. And he was ready to throw the promises of God away. Let me eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow I die.
And that was his philosophy. And it comes out here very strongly. And that's the philosophy by which multitudes of our people are living today. There is nothing really worthwhile in life but the pleasures that the life of this world can give us.
All this vague teaching about Christianity and pie in the sky when you die. We hear it so often. And it's Esau's.
[24:32] And he's sold his birthright unto Jacob. Now Jacob did not wait for God's time.

He was wanting to fulfill God's purpose but he was wanting to force God's hand. And that's with every one of us. Or the danger is always there.
And I'm sure he was prompted by the mother. The same thing happened when it came to the question of the blessing.
She put Jacob up to it. And then when things were wrong she said oh well now Jacob look at what you've done. You'd better beat it. Jesus after your blood. Now the birthright.

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Why was the birthright? Let me just mention two or three things about the birthright. The birthright in the whole society in the times of which Jacob lived was a very precious thing.
[25:45] It carried the excellency of dignity and power with it. And it was especially precious in the family of Abraham because of the covenant promise of God.

It brought a double portion with it in the family of Abraham. It had spiritual power and reality as well as temporal privilege and position.
Spiritually it bestowed priestly rights within the family of Abraham. And it carried with it also this that the one who became the depository and the communicator of the revelation of God to the family and the clan.
He was the priest. It carried that with it. It carried something else. It carried the promise and pledge of being in the line from which Messiah would come.
man. Do you see what Esau was ready to throw away? That's why Scripture calls him elsewhere a profane man.
[27:04] He treated the promises and the privileges of God's grace disdainfully. When he weighed them in the balances worldly advantages prevailed and he let them go.

Now when he came to the blessing the same thing he begged I put Jacob up to him and he went in there and he won the blessing from the father.
And then they had to leave. You see Rebecca and Jacob the two of them further yet and because of their faith because of their belief in the promise of God and because of their belief in the privileges the promise carried they wanted to help God along.
And you know how often Christian believers feel that and how often Christian sermons tell Christian believers that. Now my friend the preacher will say you get out there and work away if God can help God along.
Do we? There are many areas in which we stopped interfering God would help us along because it's not God who needs help usually.
[28:24] It says furthering the hindus of faith with the weapons of the flesh. God and Jacob went through another twenty years of doing the same thing.

He did what his mother and his father told him. He went to his uncle and if Jacob himself was a twister and he was that's what his name means.
He met another twister than Laban. He fell in love with Laban's younger daughter. You know the story. It's lovely isn't it? And he's there for seven years and he loved her so much that seven years it passed very quickly.

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