

Handfuls On Purpose

Studies in the Book of Ruth

Chapter Five

Full Surrender: The Open Door to Power with God

“¹ And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. ² And when Jacob saw them, he said, This *is* God’s host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim. {that is, two hosts, or, camps} ³ And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom. ⁴ And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau; Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now: ⁵ And I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and menservants, and womenservants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight. ⁶ And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him. ⁷ Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that *was* with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands; ⁸ And said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape. ⁹ And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: ¹⁰ I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. ¹¹ Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, *and* the mother with the children. ¹² And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude. ¹³ And he lodged there that same night; and took of that which came to his hand a present for Esau his brother; ¹⁴ Two hundred she goats, and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes, and twenty rams, ¹⁵ Thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, twenty she asses, and ten foals. ¹⁶ And he delivered *them* into the hand of his servants, every drove by themselves; and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space betwixt drove and drove. ¹⁷ And he commanded the foremost, saying, When Esau my brother meeteth thee, and asketh thee, saying, Whose *art* thou? and whither goest thou? and whose *are* these before thee? ¹⁸ Then thou shalt say, *They be* thy servant Jacob’s; it *is* a present sent unto my lord Esau: and, behold, also he *is* behind us. ¹⁹ And so commanded he the second, and the third, and all that followed the droves, saying, On this manner shall ye speak unto Esau, when ye find him. ²⁰ And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob *is* behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me. ²¹ So went the present over before him: and himself lodged that night in the company. ²² And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two womenservants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok. ²³ And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had. ²⁴ And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. ²⁵ And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. ²⁶ And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. ²⁷ And he said unto him, What *is* thy name? And he said, Jacob. ²⁸ And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel {Israel: that is, A prince of God}; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. ²⁹ And Jacob asked *him*, and said, Tell *me*, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore *is* it *that* thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. ³⁰ And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel {Peniel: that is, The face of God}; for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. ³¹ And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh. ³² Therefore the children of Israel eat not *of* the sinew which shrank, which *is* upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob’s thigh in the sinew that shrank” (Genesis 32:1-32).

Many Christians (perhaps most Christians) live their lives without ever fully surrendering to the Lord (or even considering it). This is either because of a degree of unbelief in their lives or they think full surrender is for some special order of Christians who are called be pastors or missionaries. God wants full surrender from all Christians. This is the Bible doctrine of consecration.

Consecration is an important doctrine in the Bible because God only uses consecrated Christians. It is only the consecrated Christian who is filled with (controlled and empowered by) the Holy Spirit. Therefore, only the consecrated Christian will produce the fruit of the Spirit in his life. Consecration is the first step in what Christ refers to as abiding in Him in John chapter 15.

As we have studied the book of Ruth, it is interesting to hear how God uses circumstances and trials to bring people to the place in their lives where they finally make the necessary commitments so that He can finally use them and empower them for service. Naomi and Ruth were such people. The same is true of this man called Jacob in our text today. That is why we will take a short excursion back to the time of Jacob.

Every person in this world is being pulled in two directions. We are all being pulled towards the world (Satan's temptations to selfish and sinful living). We are all being pulled towards the Lord and the spiritual things of God and eternity. Because man is fallen in sin, man has a tendency (appetite) for the things of the world.

The person seeking to grow spiritually is working in partnership (fellowship) with the Holy Spirit to resist temptation and the pull of our flesh towards the things of this world. It can be said that this person is *growing*. However, the person who is not striving to grow spiritually and is not resisting the temptations of this world will simply be carried along by the strong current with little resistance. It can be said that person is just *flowing*.

Up to the point in time recorded in Genesis chapter 32, Jacob was the latter kind of person. He was just going with the flow. He was deeply caught up in the things of the world and the lust of his flesh. In Genesis 32:1, we find Jacob doing just that, going with the flow. It says there, "And Jacob went on his way."

Jacob's life was one of cunning and deceit. He learned the mastery of these works of his flesh at the apron strings of his mother Rebekah. There he learned the art of manipulation. In Chapters 31 and 32 of Genesis, we find the turning point in Jacob's life. From this point forward, Jacob would be a different man. This turning point in Jacob's life revolves around a common denominator in the life of anyone ever used of God. A great Christian is not great because of how much he has of Christ (we all have an equal amount), but how much Christ has of him.

I have watched many people in my life with just enough Christianity to make them miserable. They attend church services, read their Bibles on occasion and try to be all around good people. Yet there is a spiritual deadness about them. There is no joy in their Christianity. The reason is simple. They have never stepped away from themselves long enough to make full surrender of their lives and to really know what it means to serve the Lord. Christianity is intended to be an open door to the power of God on their lives. To them Christianity is nothing more than a closed up box of restraints of do's and don'ts.

Until they get beyond all of that and begin to really become involved in helping people and working to rescue people from the rapids of sin, they will never grasp the reality of what Christianity is all about. They will never know the joy of seeing someone come to faith in Jesus Christ. They will never know the joy of seeing the weight of the burden of sin lifted off someone's shoulders. They will never experience the joy of knowing that some little boy or girl will no longer have to fear the beatings of a drunken mother or father because that mother or father has gotten saved.

Yet one of the saddest things about this kind of Christian is that he/she will never know the inner joy that comes to the heart that knows full surrender to Jesus Christ. They will never know the inner peace of being completely right with God. They will never know what it means to have the power of God on their lives. Full surrender is to step away from this world and all the pseudo places of security we have built for ourselves out of material things and step into the empowering grace of God where He can use us.

Read Genesis 32:9-11. Notice Jacob had been told by God (Genesis 31:11-13) to leave the household of Laban and to return to Bethel (the house of God). Jacob did not want to go there because Esau was there. All of Jacob's possessions were the things he had cheated Esau to get. In order for Jacob to be obedient to God, he had to go back to Bethel and take care of the matter of the past sin deception he had been running away from for over 20 years (Genesis 31:38). In order to do so, he would have to leave the security and safety net of the world he had built to protect himself from his own brother and from the consequences of his deceptive life. However, in doing so he would also obey God for the first time in his life. He is immediately confronted with a crisis situation.

Look friends, when you are going with the flow, Satan won't bother making things tough. When Jacob decided to do what was right, he turned around in the current and began to battle upstream. If you never confront your past and face up to the people you have failed, you will always be running away locked into the prison of yesterday's failures. The moment you decide to begin doing things God's way, expect trouble. God didn't promise to keep you from trouble. He promised to deliver you through it.

In Genesis chapter 32, Jacob is about to learn a lesson every Christian needs to learn. If anyone wants to live for Christ and walk in obedience, it is absolutely essential to learn to live dependant upon Christ.

“For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17).

“But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is evident*: for, The just shall live by faith” (Galatians 3:11).

“Now the just shall live by faith: but if *any man* draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him” (Hebrews 10:38).

“But without faith *it is impossible* to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

Jacob is scared to death in doing what God expects of him. Full surrender will always take us to the limits of our faith. He thinks his brother is going to kill him. Has he believed God?

¹¹ Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, *and* the mother with the children. ¹² And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude” (Genesis 32:11-12).

Can God accomplish what He says in verse 12 if Jacob is dead? Jacob prays. However, it is obvious he is still not trusting God to deliver him (Genesis 32:13-20).

“And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob *is* behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me” (Genesis 32:20).

Jacob is still manipulating, still playing politics and still doing things the same old way. Jacob has still not learned the basics of spiritual living. He is over 90 years old and still in spiritual kindergarten. We find a different (changed) man meeting Esau in Genesis chapter 33. In chapter 33, Jacob has been humbled. In Chapter 33, we find Jacob acknowledging his sin and seeking Esau's forgiveness and asking for mercy. Why the change? What took place between Genesis 32:23 and Genesis 33:3? Jacob had a close encounter with God; an all night wrestling match.

“And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day” (Genesis 32:24).

Jacob did not realize it, but this was finally the end of a lifetime of wrestling with God.

When you are in a wrestling match with God, you can never win until you surrender (and die to self). There are many Christians living their lives in a wrestling match with God and are not even aware of it. If that describes you, understand at this moment what it took Jacob a lifetime to learn. The wrestling match you are fighting is a battle to the death. That night Jacob lost. The man going with the flow died and Israel (the man of God) was born.

The name Jacob (32:7) means *crooked heel catcher*. Jacob was a man who would do almost anything to have power with *men*. Now (after surrendering) he was a man who would have “power with God.” That is what the name Israel means. It is only when you have real power with God that you have real power with men.

“And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel {that is, A prince of or with God}: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed” (Genesis 32:28).

In order for this all to take place, God had to change something about Jacob that would last for the rest of his life. It would be a physical change that would be a continual reminder of the day he wrestled with God and “prevailed.”

¹ Then Jacob went on his journey, and came into the land of the people of the east. ² And he looked, and behold a well in the field, and, lo, there *were* three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks: and a great stone *was* upon the well’s mouth. ³ And thither were all the flocks gathered: and they rolled the stone from the well’s mouth, and watered the sheep, and put the stone again upon the well’s mouth in his place. ⁴ And Jacob said unto them, My brethren, whence *be ye*? And they said, Of Haran *are we*. ⁵ And he said unto them, Know ye Laban the son of Nahor? And they said, We know *him*. ⁶ And he said unto them, *Is he well*? And they said, *He is well*: and, behold, Rachel his daughter cometh with the sheep. ⁷ And he said, Lo, *it is yet high day*, neither *is it* time that the cattle should be gathered together: water ye the sheep, and go *and feed them*. ⁸ And they said, We cannot, until all the flocks be gathered together, and *till* they roll the stone from the well’s mouth; then we water the sheep. ⁹ And while he yet spake with them, Rachel came with her father’s sheep: for she kept them. ¹⁰ And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother’s brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother’s brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well’s mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother’s brother” (Genesis 29:1-10).

According to Genesis 29:8, the stone that covered the mouth of the well was so large it required a group of shepherds to move it before the sheep could be watered. However (according to Genesis 29:10), Jacob has enormously powerful legs and was able to move the stone by himself. In Jacob’s wrestling match with God, God touched Jacob’s thigh and took the strength of those legs away. From that moment on, Jacob never walked the same again (physically or spiritually). God wants people who walk by faith.

³¹ And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh. ³² Therefore the children of Israel eat not *of* the sinew which shrank, which *is* upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob’s thigh in the sinew that shrank” (Genesis 32:31-32).

The new name Israel expresses the blessing of God (v 26) on a new walk of faith. Man’s power *with* God is always directly proportionate to his faith in God and his surrender to God. At Bethel, Jacob was converted. He was saved. At Bethel, Jacob learned that God was the Ruler of every place he would set his foot. But at Jabbok (where Jacob wrestled with God), God became the ruler of Jacob by Jacob’s choice.

Has God become the ruler of your life by your choice? It only happens when you fully surrender. Until then you are in a wrestling match with God. You will never win until you surrender. God becomes the ruler of your life when He has control of your heart. He will never take that control from you. You must willingly give Him control.

Pray this prayer from your heart, *Lord; I am Yours, body, soul and spirit. All that I am, all I have and all I can be is Yours to use as You see fit. If You want me to be a missionary, I will go. If You want me to be a preacher, I will preach. Where You want me to serve, I will serve. What You want me to give, I will give. Whatever, wherever, and whenever, I am Yours Father! Amen*

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1. What are the two directions in which every person is being pulled?

A. _____

B. _____

2. From that perspective, are you *growing* or *flowing*? _____

3. What kind of man was Jacob before Genesis 32? Use one word to describe him? _____

4. Christianity is not how much you have of Christ, but how much He has of _____.

5. In Genesis 31:11-13, God told Jacob to leave the household of Laban at Haran and go back to Bethel. Why was that such a problem for Jacob according to Genesis 32:9-11? _____

A. In order to go forward for Christ, we must learn to face our past with courage and faith. From that perspective, do you think full surrender (and the obedience to God that goes with it) will ever be easy? _____

B. If you were going to measure the degree of a person's faith, would you find a more accurate measurement under a life of ease or adversity? Why? _____

6. If you never confront your past and face up to the people you have failed, you will always be _____ away from your past.

7. When a Christian begins to take those *giant-steps* of obedience, what should he expect to happen? _____

8. What is absolutely essential to learn before a Christian will ever fully surrender to Christ and walk in obedience? _____

A From Genesis 32:12 we see the promise of God to Jacob. What does Jacob's fear reveal to us about the reality of his faith? _____

B. Do you think Jacob really believed God for this promise? _____

9. Read Genesis 32:20. After Jacob asked God for deliverance from Esau's wrath, does he trust God for deliverance or does he revert back to his old ways? What words reveal his attitude? _____

10. If you have never consciously, personally and publicly surrendered your life fully to Christ, do you think you will be in a *wrestling match* with God until you do so? _____

12. From Genesis 32:27, was it Jacob or Israel that prevailed? _____

A. Why is it important to distinguish between the old Jacob and the new man named Israel?

B. What does the name *Jacob* mean? _____

C. Does that describe Jacob's old character? _____

D. What does the name *Israel* mean? _____

E. Does that describe his new character and position with God? _____

13. From Genesis 29:1-10, what about Jacob did God have to change before Jacob would fully surrender?

A. Will it take something like that in your life (some physical affliction) in order for you to fully surrender to Christ? _____

B. With that physical affliction, could Jacob ever return to walking in his own strength again?

14. The new name Israel, expresses the blessing of God (32:26) on a walk of _____.

15. A person's power with God (and real power with men) is always directly proportionate to his _____ in God.

16. At Bethel, Jacob was converted (he was saved). At Bethel, Jacob learned that God was the real ruler of every place he would set his foot. At the river Jabbok, where Jacob wrestled with God, what did God finally become ruler of by Jacob's choice? _____

17. Surrendering to God is not giving *up*, but giving *in* to God. Before you can personally fully surrender to God, what areas of your life must you confront and deal with? _____

18. In salvation, God gives you His life (I John 5:11-12). When you fully surrender to Him, you surrender that new life to Him to use any way He sees fit. If you have trusted Jesus Christ with the eternal destiny of your soul, can you trust Him with the remaining years of this temporal lifetime? _____

19. Will you? _____