

## News & Notes

**Sunday, September 20, 2009**

**Remember in Prayer:** Mary Baily; Dot Ketchum; Dallas King; John and Deliah Mann; Kaylee Northrop; Ann Ray; Curtis Ray; Katherine Shaw; Ruby Tapp; Calvin Ursery; Alvie Williford;

**Pantry item** for the month of September is dental floss.

**Sympathy** is extended to the families of Nick Wilbanks and Troy Hobson.

The latest edition of **House to House/Heart to Heart** is available.

**Ashland Events:** Today: Prayer meeting at 4:00 PM; Youth devotional following evening service; September 27: Baby shower for the Bennett's in conjunction with the scheduled fellowship meal.

**Area Events:** Beginning today: Gospel meeting at the Grand Junction congregation; September 27-29: Gospel meeting at the Union congregation; September 28: Lectureship at the Charleston congregation.

### Sermon in Preview:

AM: "He Must Increase but I Must Decrease" (John 3:30)

PM: The Gospel Plan of Salvation

### For the Record (September 13, 2009):

Attendance: 84      Contribution: \$1122.00      Budget: \$1459.00

### *The Ashland Church of Christ*

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#### Sunday:

Bible Study 9:30 AM  
Worship 10:30 AM  
Worship 5:00 PM

#### Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 PM

#### Shepherds:

Barney King  
Jeff Roberson  
Carrol Street

# ASHLAND ANNOUNCER

*"Note Those Who So Walk"*

Philippians 3:17

2Thessalonians 3:14

## Jacob — Wrestling With God

Jeremy Northrop

Wrestling is a popular pastime in American culture. Some might be surprised to find wrestling in the Bible. It is not only in the Bible, but Jacob wrestles with God! In Genesis 32:22-32, an account is provided where Jacob wrestles all night. Verse 28 reveals that Jacob wrestled with God. In verse 30, Jacob reveals that he had seen God. The story actually begins in verse 22 where Jacob sent his wives, servants, and belongings and was alone. While alone, he wrestles with a man all night. Verse 25 says God touched the hip of Jacob and took it out of joint.

Later, as the account continues, God changes Jacob's name to Israel. This is very interesting because of what the names Jacob and Israel mean. Jacob means 'heel catcher' which makes sense as Jacob came out of the womb holding Esau's heel. Israel means 'he will reign as God' which makes sense in light of verse 28 of the text under consideration. This change of name is significant of the life God has planned for Jacob.

Some have argued and even questioned the validity of the account asserting it does not make sense for Jacob to wrestle with God. The account certainly leaves a lot of unanswered questions. However, just because the questions one might have in reference to the story are not answered does not mean the story is not real. The book of Genesis is a literal historical account of events in the early world. Thus, the dialog is not symbolic in the sense that the events are not real or literal. The account is symbolic, however, in the sense that there are lessons for children of God to learn about faith development.

What does the account mean? In an immediate way, the account was symbolic of what was prophetically revealed in Genesis 25. This chapter tells of the account of Esau selling his birthright to Jacob. Two nations were represented then by Jacob and Esau (Genesis 25:23). This, of course, came to pass and the older son served the younger or Edom (Esau) served Israel (Jacob). This is vividly seen in the book of Obadiah where God's wrath was kindled against the Edomites yet God's chosen nation was Israel.

The account in Genesis 32 also has some great lessons about the progression of faith. Everyone today is taking a walk of faith albeit it may be a false faith. Faith has to grow and develop (see 2Peter 1:5-11). The account of Jacob wrestling with God shows a journey of faith on the part of Jacob. This then, might have a broader and perhaps more meaningful application for those seeking the Lord today.

In the beginning, Jacob's faith came to him in *limps*. It was not his own but rather was something which was passed on to him from his parents, primarily his mother. Isaac loved Esau but Rebekah loved Jacob (Genesis 25:28). When faith begins, often times, it is the result of the actions of someone else. Timothy had faith which was first in Lois and Eunice (2Timothy 1:5). Parents are admonished to teach their children in the ways of the Lord (Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4). Children of God are exhorted to teach others about him or to pass their faith on to others (2Timothy 2:2).

Faith begins in lumps. It is generally started by someone teaching another about God and His will. This was the case of Jacob. This is also the case for men and women of faith today. It is true that some are able to develop faith by simply opening the Bible and reading and studying for themselves the important messages contained therein. However, by and large, people gain or develop faith because someone has enough love for them to share their own faith with them. As mentioned previously, this is the plan of God (2Timothy 2:2).

At some point, faith becomes *limps*. The words of the Psalmist ring clear here: "Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105). At some point in Jacob's life, his faith had to become his own. Some have speculated Genesis 32:22-32 was the time and place this happened. He named the place Peniel and

explains why: "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." At some point, Timothy's faith became his, not his mother's or grandmother's. Children, at some point in their lives, must make faith their own even when Godly parents teach them initially.

This experience might be compared to a lamp (light bulb) lighting up in the mind. Faith has to be genuine and based on the word of God (Romans 10:17). The writer of Hebrews says, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). Faith has to become real. Biblical faith is not some out-of-body subjective experience or feeling but rather a faith of reason, based on evidence (Hebrews 11:1). Faith has to become the lamp that leads, not the idea that coincides with life.

Finally, faith can grow by *limps*. Jacob was injured by the Lord in Genesis 32:22-32. The text says Jacob limped on his hip. Mature faith will bring about trials which can be conquered. These limps will help the child of God to grow and mature. Jacob certainly had some trials with his children as they sold their own brother Joseph into slavery and let Jacob believe he was dead. His experience with God in the text under consideration here was a faith-building experience for Jacob.

Today, faith will bring trials to the children of God. James says, "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience" (James 1:2-3). Paul said no Christian would be tested or tempted beyond what the Lord knows he is able to bear (1Corinthians 12:9). In the end, it is faith which will help the child of God to endure and overcome. Faith leads the Christian through the limps of life.

These limps can also be a suitable reminder that God is still there and God is still in control. Jacob's limp and the fact that Israel did not thereafter eat the muscle which was affected reminded them of God's providence (Genesis 32:32). Paul's thorn in the flesh reminded him God's grace was sufficient (2Corinthians 12:7-10). The trials of Christians today remind them of the grace and love of God.

Faith begins in lumps. Faith becomes lamps. Faith matures in limps.