

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Philippians 4:6

## Chapter Eight

# THE POWER OF PRAYER

Read: Genesis 27, 32, & 33



**H**ave you ever felt like you were facing a mountain, you couldn't possibly climb? Overwhelmed with a situation that was out of control? Overcome by troubles that keep coming your way?

Maybe you accepted the fact that you did all that you could. After all, some things are out of our hands. The thing to remember, however, they're not out of God's. We serve a God Who created all things, and, if He created them, He can very well change them, but it must start with prayer. The unwavering, persevering, power of prayer.

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.  
(Philippians 4:6)*

Remember Bartimaeus the blind man who sat by the side of the road. The Bible tells us that many rebuked him, telling him to be quiet, but instead of heading their voice, he shouted even more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" The result of his courageous persistence led to the restoration of his sight (Mark 10:46-52).

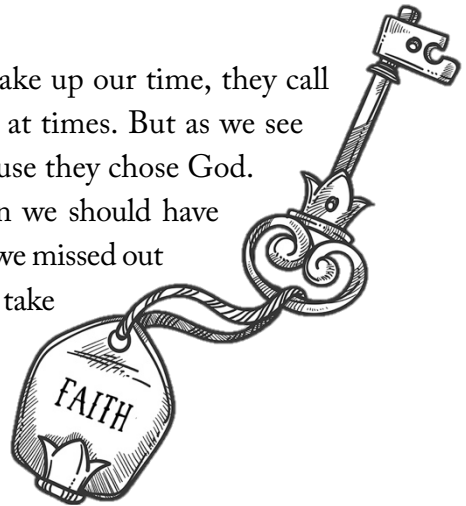
Another example of faithful persistence is found in Mark Chapter 2. Jesus was preaching in Capernaum when a large crowd gathered to hear Him. The crowd was so large that no one else could enter the house He was in. And so, four men carried their paralyzed friend through the crowd, dug a hole in the roof, and lowered Him down to Jesus so that he might be healed.

The anointed move forward regardless of what it might cost. We've seen this in every chapter of this study. In fact, we see it in the life of every faithful believer who takes up their cross.

## THE KEY TO PERSISTENCE

The best things rarely come easy. They take up our time, they call us to sacrifice, and they are inconvenient at times. But as we see in the scriptures, lives were changed because they chose God.

How many times do we give up when we should have pressed on? How many opportunities have we missed out on because we didn't have the courage to take the next step? The key to persistence is faith. Faith in the power of God to fix what we can't.



## JACOB AND ESAU

In Genesis 27, we find the story of Jacob and Esau. After trading a bowl of stew for his brother's birthright, Jacob deceived his father to gain his blessing. Isaac was old by this time, and his eyesight had failed. And so, with the help of his mother, Rebecca, Jacob clothed himself in goatskin to mimic Esau's hairy appearance. He went to Isaac with food and wine, and after he kissed his father, Jacob received a blessing that Isaac couldn't reverse.

*When Esau heard his father's words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, "Bless me—me too, my father!" But he said, "Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing." (Genesis 27:34-35)*

Esau was angry that day. So angry in fact, that the Bible tells us he intended to kill Jacob. "The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob," he said.

Because of that threat, Jacob left home to live with his uncle Laban. It was there he met his two wives, Rachel, and Leah, and started a family with them.

#### **DID YOU KNOW**

ACCORDING TO DEUTERONOMY 21:17, THE OLDEST CHILD WAS ENTITLED TO A DOUBLE SHARE IN HIS FATHER'S INHERITANCE. AND SO, WHEN ESAU SOLD HIS BIRTHRIGHT, HE SOLD BOTH THE RIGHT TO HIS INCREASED INHERITANCE AND A SPECIAL BLESSING FROM ISAAC.

Years later, Jacob got word that his brother Esau was coming to see him, and of course, he was rightly concerned. Horrified perhaps when he heard that Esau was coming with 400 men.

This story happened thousands of years ago—I know that—but I also know this,

*Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope. (Romans 15:4)*

The scriptures say that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God, because we are strengthened by the faith of those like Jacob who have humbled themselves before God.

Maybe you don't have an army of 400 men marching toward you, and hopefully you haven't experienced family drama to this extent, but chances are you've had friction in a relationship at some point in your life. Whether it was a broken marriage, a fragmented family, problems in your workplace, or a friendship that ended in pain, you know the heartache it causes, and the courage it takes to reconcile that which is lost.

## IN THE PALM OF GOD'S HAND

No one can soften a stone-cold heart or subdue a mighty army the way that God can. We can love them, and we can pray for them, but that's where it ends for us. The rest is in the palm of God's hand to do with as He will.

*In the LORD's hand the king's heart is a stream of water that he channels toward all who please him. (Proverbs 21:1)*

There's no mistaking the fact that Esau's heart was softened that day. There is no doubt that God went before Jacob to pave the way for reconciliation. The Bible tells us that Esau ran to meet Jacob, embraced him, and kissed him on the neck.

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I WILL GO BEFORE YOU  
AND WILL LEVEL THE MOUNTAINS;  
I WILL BREAK DOWN GATES OF BRONZE  
AND CUT THROUGH BARS OF IRON.  
(ISAIAH 45:2)

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## JACOB REFUSED TO GIVE UP

For some, the story ends there, but before we move on, let's turn back a chapter to Genesis 32, which takes place the night before he meets Esau. Notice Jacob's persistence. The Bible tells us that that he wrestled with God until daybreak. While they wrestled, Jacob dislocated his hip, but still he wouldn't let go. He knew how important it was to persist, and so he refused to give up on God, until he was blessed.

Some days it seems like our problems are long past the point of repair. Other days it feels like the journey ahead is out of our hands. And it is, which is why we all need to persistently pray and trust in Him Who is paving the way. The One Who knows what tomorrow will bring. The One Who wrote it all down before we were born.

Bring it to God today, bring it to Him tomorrow, bring it to Him the next day and the day beyond that. Don't give up on God. Take your burden to Him and lay it down at His feet.

God told Jacob to return to his homeland, and so he was doing just that. Yes—he was scared, but unlike others who might have given up and turned back, He faithfully turned to the Lord. He struggled with God, and he didn't quit until he was blessed.

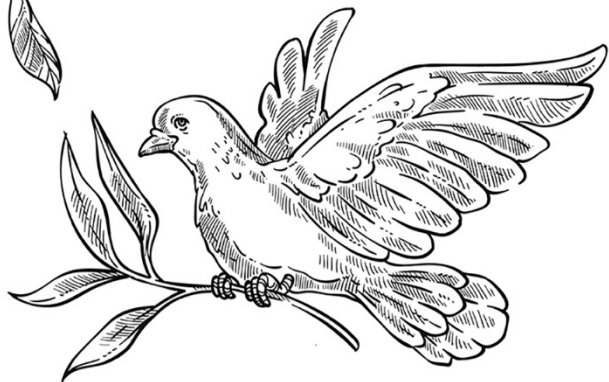
The more I study this chapter, the more I'm impressed by Jacob's actions. Verse after verse, he lays out a pattern for overcoming one's fear. And so, it's important to pause for a minute, to consider the things he did well.

As you pause and reflect on the next few pages, take a personal approach to answering the questions. We're looking at five steps that Jacob took to overcome fear. As we look at each one, ask yourself what you can learn from his example as well as any practical ways you might apply it to your life.



For it is the LORD your  
God who goes with  
you; He will never leave  
you nor forsake you.

Deut. 31:6



Step 1: Jacob was afraid, but even so, he was willing to follow God's command to return home.

*In great fear and distress Jacob divided the people who were with him into two groups, and the flocks and herds and camels as well. (Genesis 32:7)*

What can you learn from Jacob's example here?

What does Philippians 2:8 say?

Step 2: When Jacob was afraid, he turned to prayer, both expressing his feelings to the Lord, and asking God to help him.

*Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children. (Genesis 32:11)*

What can you learn from Jacob's example here?

What does Psalm 46:1 say?

Step 3: He trusted in the promise from God and leaned into that promise when he needed strength.

*But you have said, 'I will surely make you prosper and will make your descendants like the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted.'*” (Genesis 32:12)

What can you learn from Jacob's example here?

What does Hebrews 10:23 say?

Step 4: He wrestled with God until he was blessed.

*Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." (Genesis 32:26)*

What can you learn from Jacob's example here?

What does Luke 18:7 say?

Step 5: Before asking God for a blessing, Jacob made a conscious effort to reconcile with Esau by sending a gift to him.

*He spent the night there, and from what he had with him he selected a gift for his brother Esau: two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty female camels with their young, forty cows and ten bulls, and twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. (Genesis 32:13)*

What can we learn from Jacob's example here?

What does Matthew 5:23-24 say?