

Prayer List

Gene
Veda
Wallace
Sheila
Ophelia

Services:

Sunday

Bible Class 9:00 a.m.
Assembly 10:00 a.m.
Assembly 11:00 a.m.

Wednesday

Bible Class 7:00 p.m.

Elders:

Brad Behrens - bradbehrens@pinolechurchofchrist.com

Michael Odom - MichaelOdom@pinolechurchofchrist.com

Ernie Sprinkel - preacher@pinolechurchofchrist.com

This Week's Question:

Who out ran a team of horses pulling a chariot?

Answer To Last Week's Question:

Aaron - Numbers 16:46-48

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Pinole Tidings

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Jacob: A Checkered Life to a Changed Man

David Holder

Do you ever strive with God—wishing to do His will while simultaneously refusing it? We make it hard on ourselves when we do this. I don't know about you, but sometimes I strive with God. I need His help to see me through the checkered parts of my life and transform me into His image. The life and faith of Jacob give us help and hope.

At 130 years old, Jacob stood before Pharaoh and said, “Few and evil have been the years of my life” (Genesis 47:9). Over against Jacob’s personal observation, the writer of Hebrews noted, “By faith, Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff” (11:21). The polarity of these statements documents a life of striving with God—a checkered life to a changed man.

Jacob was a man of faith. Several times we discover flashes of faith (28:16–22; 32:9–12; 33:5, 20; 35:2–4, 14–15; 46:1; 47:27–31; 48:15–16), yet mingled with these were bouts with worldliness. Jacob grew old and faithful, but faithlessness frequently marked his younger years and he bore the consequences of it.

A Deceiver Was Deceived

Jacob stole Esau's blessing, obtaining it through deceit (Genesis 27). He got what he wanted, but paid a heavy price. Jacob spent the rest of his life surrounded by deceit.

Laban deceived Jacob to marry Leah before Rachel (29:21–25). In his old age, Jacob's sons deceived him into thinking a wild animal had killed Joseph (37:31–35). Jacob's character rubbed off on his family. Jacob deceived Laban (31:20–21), and Rachel did too (31:34–35). Jacob's sons deceived Hamor and Shechem (ch. 34). Tamar deceived Judah (ch. 38). In his checkered life, the deceiver was himself surrounded by deceit.

A Supplanter Was Troubled

The name 'Jacob' means "supplanter," derived from a word referring to the heel and meaning to follow at the heel, overreach, or supplant. Esau noted that Jacob lived up to his name, taking away both his birthright and blessing (Genesis 27:36). Jacob supplanted Esau and got what he wanted, but experienced guilt and anxiety when he met Esau many years later (32:1–23).

Jacob supplanted Laban by gaining more flocks and family than Laban (30:41–43), and Jacob was troubled by Laban's cheating him and changing his wages (31:7). The actions of Jacob's sons against Shechem brought the probability of trouble from the inhabitants of the land (34:30). Joseph's reported death troubled Jacob and he refused to be comforted (37:35). Jacob's pattern of supplanting was met with trouble in his own life.

A Wrestler Was Crippled

Jacob's life and death struggle with a "man" epitomizes his checkered life (Genesis 32:24–32). This struggle indicates it was really not against Esau or Laban he had been fighting; all along it was against God. The night attack occurred at a critical moment, just before Jacob encountered Esau and returned to his homeland. He would do so as a changed man.

In the wrestling match, Jacob showed strong endurance. His opponent had to touch Jacob's thigh to dislocate it. Jacob must have wondered if his adversary were more than a man, but became even more determined and forced his opponent to bless him. Jacob was blessed, but left limping. God left his mark on Jacob. He was not totally self-sufficient.

A Straggler Prevailed

Throughout his life, Jacob was determined to acquire blessings one way or the other, and he often obtained them his own way. Up to the point of the night attack, Jacob was striving with God. When the opponent asked his name, 'Jacob' answered and by this name admitted his grimy past (Wenham, Genesis 16–50, p. 302). Here he was striving with God again, and God allowed him to "win" and blessed him: "you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed." It was not the Jacob overpowered God, but God worked with him to bring him within the divine purpose.

To signify the blessing, God changed Jacob's name to Israel. 'Jacob' would no longer supplant the divine will, but 'Israel' would be dependent on God's grace. "It was defeat and victory in one ... Jacob emerged broken, named and blessed. His limping would be lasting proof of the reality of this struggle ... and there was sharp judgment in it. The new name would attest his new standing ... wiping out an old reproach (27:36)" (Kidner, Genesis, p. 169) and defining an aspiration to live up to. Jacob left in awe (32:30), reborn as Israel.

Jacob's struggle with God exemplified Israel's national struggle (Hosea 12:2–4). God's people were often found fighting against Him. And we do too, don't we? If we will stop striving with God, conform to His purpose, trust Him, and walk before Him in awe, His enormous blessings will be ours, struggles and all.