

## February 1-Genesis 32

Jacob finds himself in a sticky situation in Genesis 32. Earlier in Genesis, Jacob deceived his father Isaac and stole the blessing that was rightfully Esau's. Shortly after, Esau had stated that he was going to kill Jacob and so Jacob fled to family far away. Now, Jacob finds himself preparing to "face the music" as he encounters his older brother who is most assuredly still angry at him. The Bible records for us all of the steps Jacob took in preparation for meeting Esau but finally, he prayed. In this prayer, we find some incredible insight into Jacob's belief and we see a great example of a proper attitude towards God for the believer who encounters a tough and frightening situation. We must realize, times of fear are always times for prayer. If we fear something, we need to pray to God (the only one who can sufficiently protect us) asking for His help, guidance, and peace. It is through prayer that we make our requests known to God (Philippians 4:6) but it is also through prayer that we take every thought captive (2 Corinthians 10:5). Prayer puts things in perspective as we are reminded that our problems are miniscule in the presence of our powerful and mighty God.

Notice a few aspects of this prayer recorded in verses 9-12: First, Jacob recognizes that God is his "Lord" (v. 9). The term translated Lord here is the Hebrew term "Yahweh". Yahweh was the personal name used for God meaning that God was not only God over everything but also my own God. There are many people who believe that God exists and yet do not believe that He is God over their own lives. By acknowledging God as being personal, Jacob acknowledges his own relationship and submission to God. Ultimately all of our prayers should echo that of Christ in the garden of Gethsemane when He says "nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." God is Lord and therefore in complete control of our lives but He also personally relates to His children making Him near and loving. Second, Jacob bases his prayer on God's Word to him. As we look again at verse 9 we see that Jacob refers back to the exact promise God made to him in Genesis 28:13-15. His prayer, and subsequent actions, were not based on wishful thinking but rather on the infallible Word of God. Our comfort comes in knowing the truth that God has given us and standing on it even in the midst of life's great struggles and storms. Third, Jacob specifically acknowledges the blessings of God on his life in verse 10. In doing so, Jacob is reminded that God has faithfully blessed and provided in his past. It is so important that we acknowledge what God has already done as we pray for His future protection and blessing. Do not fall into the trap of generic and trite statements of thanksgiving. Instead, when you face difficulty and trial remember specific instances of God's faithfulness and blessing. Our faith for the future is not based on positive thinking, it is founded upon the God who always has and always will be faithful. Finally, Jacob has a specific request for God. There is nothing wrong with praying specifically for what you need or want. Jacob asks that God would "deliver me from the hand of my brother". He knew exactly what he wanted and he asked God to give it to him. Focused and specific requests should be made to God, but the order is important. We must first take time to reorient our own minds in remembering how great, loving, and trustworthy our God is before we ask of Him. Our hearts must treasure God above all things if we are going to ask, and receive, that which is in accordance with His will.

Of course, today as we pray to God we would be wise to follow this same pattern as we reflect on the glorious truth of the Gospel. As brothers and sisters in Christ we are saved because of our great Savior Jesus Christ whose name "Emmanuel" means God with us (Matthew 1:23). He is transcendent and strong but He is also personal and near. He is the Word of God (John 1) who "has spoken" once and for all (Hebrews 1:2) and it is through His promise of redemption that we have our ultimate blessing and hope for the future. The requests that we make of our God should be brought before Him in confidence because of the work of Christ (Ephesians 3:12) knowing that God hears us because of His sacrifice on our behalf. Brother and sister, if you are tempted today to believe that God doesn't love you, isn't mindful of you, or isn't strong enough to work in your situation, look no farther than the Cross as a reminder that He is "able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us" (Ephesians 3:20).