

Not Worthy, But Still Favoured!

Genesis 32:10: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shown unto thy servant."

The events of this chapter occurred at a most critical time in the life of Jacob, when he was preparing to meet his brother Esau. The sin of many years ago caused a sharp division between them and Esau was stirred up to take his brother's life in retaliation for Jacob's stealing his birth-right and blessing.

After having been away from his homeland for so long, Jacob is now on his

way back. He has left Padanaram and is en route to Canaan. But he knows he must pass by Edom, the country where Esau has settled. Seeing there had been no reconciliation between them, he fears the worst.

At the time he needed encouragement, he got it.

We read, "Jacob went on his way and the angels of God met him." The visible presence of God's host was in itself an assurance, and helped Jacob to know that he would return to his own land in peace.

But he still felt it necessary to make some practical preparations for meeting Esau. He sent out

messengers of peace who appealed for mercy on his behalf. He divided his company so that all would not fall foul to violence at the same time. Then he sent his brother a present.

After all this, Jacob was cast upon God. He appealed to His faithfulness which had been proved in previous generations – “O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac” (V.9). He pleaded the divine promise – “The Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee.”

Next, he cast himself on the mercy of God – “I am not

worthy of the least of all thy mercies.” Twenty years before this, when he crossed over Jordan in his flight from Esau, his sole property was the staff he carried in his hand. Now, he is blessed with great increase. He disclaims all merit of his own, and acknowledges that God's goodness had made him great.

He needed the Lord yet again, and he humbled himself before Him. We will always be in need of God's mercy and grace. If we want it we can get it. Here's what the Bible says, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. Casting all

your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Peter 5:6, 7).

A Consideration of the Mercies of God.

"All the mercies" shows the largeness of God's bounty. Jacob recalls mercies he had already received and looked to the Lord for future mercies.

God had revealed Himself as a God of mercy, first at Beersheba in the vision of the ladder set up on the earth, whose top reached to Heaven. There He pledged His Presence to Jacob for the rest of his days, His protecting power, and His guiding hand – "Behold I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places

whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land.”

God was merciful to Jacob in the house of Laban, and made him prosperous, giving him a large family and a successful business.

And He was merciful again when he helped Jacob escape, and hindered Laban from doing him harm.

All these blessings were undeserved, for Jacob had grievously sinned, and his sin had caused great division in the family. He had broken his father's heart by his deception, and because he had to flee for his life from Esau he robbed his mother of his company.

Jacob deserved nothing of the goodness of God. But then again, neither do we, yet we have received mercies in abundance.

God's mercies are various described in Holy Writ. They are tender, because they spring from pity (James 5:12). They are good, reflecting His holy character (Psalm 109:21). They are *abundant*, meeting every need (1 Peter 1:3). They are *eternal*, because they never die (1 Chronicles 16:34).

The greatest mercy is salvation. That is, deliverance from the penalty of sin by Christ dying in our place; deliverance from the power of

sin by Him living in our heart; deliverance from the presence of sin when He comes again to take us to be with Him.

A tangible display of remorse for offences caused can help. Proverbs says, "A gift in secret pacifieth anger, and a reward to the bosom strong wrath" (ch.18:16, 21:14). Jacob tried this with Esau.

However, we cannot appease the just anger of God against our sin by offering Him anything. Romans 5:6: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."

I would add that every blessing that follows conversion is also a mercy.

And if you have been successful in any good way, you should credit God for it as Jacob did.

Alas, some consider themselves to be “self-made.” One critic remarked of another – “He is a self-made man and worships his creator.”

Spurgeon writes: “If we are self-made, I am sure we had a very bad maker, and there must be a great many flaws in us. It would be better to be ground back to dust again, and made over anew go as to become God-made men.”

God-made men are humble and grateful, a new creation in Jesus Christ. Thankfulness, not pride, is their distinguishing mark. They can sing in the words of an old hymn:

*For all the Lord has done for
me,*

*I never shall cease to praise
Him.*

*And for His love so great, so
free,*

*I never will cease to praise
Him*

**The Confession of
Unworthiness Before God.**

“I am not worthy...”

**Before Laban, Jacob was
worthy of a great deal more**

than what he had. Laban had treated him cruelly, despite all he had done for him.

He gave his son-in-law Leah for his wife instead of Rachel for whom he had served him seven years. He devoured the money of Jacob's wives, changed his wages ten times, and then pursued him in anger because he had left with his wives, his children and his flocks to return to his native land.

So before Laban, Jacob used language of self-vindication and justification. But before God he says, "I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies."

There is nothing inconsistent in this. For true humility is forming a right estimate of yourself before God. Before Laban Jacob could say that he had a right to what God had given him. But before God Himself he had to acknowledge that he had no rights.

This we must always remember when we come to pray. We must forget what we are in respect of others and remember what we are before Him whose grace we so much need. We are nothing, and God is never under obligation to us for our integrity or industry.

Moreover, we are never worthy before God, in and

of ourselves. Note that Jacob's confession of unworthiness relates to the present as well as to the past.

He does not say, "I was not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which thou hast shewed me." Rather he says, "I am not worthy."

He believed that he was unworthy when he crossed over Jordan the first time, alone, having nothing but the clothes upon his back, a poor, banished man. He believes that he is still unworthy, even as he looks on his flocks and herds and on his great family.

That is the position we must always take before God. We are not worthy to be saved (Luke 15:19). We are not worthy of answers to prayer (Matthew 8:8). We are not worthy of the least service (Matthew 3:11).

We are not worthy to open the book of God (compare V.10 & Revelation 5:4). Best of all mercies is when He opens the book to us. "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." "Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?"

Though we are unworthy of the mercies of God and the truth of God, we have both.

Remember that it is the truth of God that makes His mercies sure, and that you could not know it apart from the Bible.

King George V: "It is my confident hope that my subjects cherish their noble inheritance in the English Bible, which is the first of national treasures. Its spiritual significance is the most valuable thing the world affords."

The Claiming of the Promise of God.

V.9 & ch.31:3, 13; V.12 & ch.28:13-15.

Key phrase – “I will surely do thee good.”

William Jay of Bath, writing upon this passage, made four observations:

‘First, God has the ability to do you good. Whatever good it is that you need, He can give it to you - pardon of sin, help in trouble, comfort in distress.

Second, God has the inclination to do you good. Do not speak to Him, as if He were unwilling to bless you. It is according to His nature to be gracious.

Third, God is under an engagement to do you good. "Thou saidst, Surely I will do thee good." God has given a promise to seeking sinners, that He will be found of them;

to repentant sinners that He will pardon them; to believing sinners, that they shall find eternal life.

God has already done you good. This fact ought to strengthen your faith. "Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good." Go and plead it, and the Lord do unto you according to your faith!'

God answered Jacob's prayer. Ch.32:4: "And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."

Conclusion:

- Get to know what God has said.

- Take the lowly place in prayer before Him
- When He answers you, return Him thanks.
- Psalm 115:1: "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."
- Read the Parable of the Pharisee & the Publican – Luke 11:13-14.