



*He who has attained to knowledge of his
weakness has reached greater knowledge
than he who has seen angels.*

— St Isaac the Syrian

13: JACOB – WRESTLING FOR BLESSING

“Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob’s hip was out of joint as He wrestled with Him. And He said, ‘Let Me go, for the day breaks.’ But he said, ‘I will not let You go unless You bless me!’ So He said to him, ‘What is your name?’ He said, ‘Jacob.’ And He said, ‘Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.’”

— Genesis 32:24–28 (NKJV)

The river ran dark in the night. Jacob sent all he had across the ford of Jabbok—wives, children, servants, possessions. Left alone, stripped of his protections, he faced what he had long evaded: his own name, his own reflection, his own unfinished story. Then out of the shadows came a Stranger, and the night became an arena.

They wrestled until dawn. Flesh against flesh, will against will, Jacob against the nameless One. No words of promise now, only struggle; no dream of ladders, only dust and sweat. Here Jacob discovered that blessing is not seized by cunning or deceit, but given through surrender. Here his name deceiver, supplanter—was inverted, and his identity reborn.

📖 **READ:** GENESIS 37:18–28; GENESIS 39:20–23; PSALM 105:17–19

THE STRUGGLE FOR IDENTITY

Jacob had wrestled all his life. He wrestled in the womb with

Esau, he wrestled with his father for the blessing, he wrestled with Laban for flocks and wages. His name itself testified to his striving—Jacob, the supplanter, the one who grasps at the heel.

Yet none of these struggles resolved the ache of his heart. He carried the blessing but also the wound of deception. He was chosen, yet insecure; called, yet unsettled. On the banks of Jabbok, God met him in his restless striving and turned the struggle inward. Jacob wrestled not only with a man but with God, and in that wrestling his old identity was broken.

The prophet Hosea recalls this night: “*Yes, he struggled with the Angel and prevailed; he wept, and sought favour from Him*” (Hosea 12:4). Jacob’s tears mingled with his tenacity. He would not let go, not until the blessing was spoken, not until the name was changed.

THE INVERSION OF THE NAME

When the Stranger asked, “*What is your name?*” it was more than a question of identification. It was confession. Jacob had to speak aloud what he was—deceiver, heel-grasper, striver. To name himself was to own the truth of his old identity. Only then could he receive the new.

Even the place told the truth. Jabbok sounded like Jacob turned back on himself—his name rearranged in the stream. Under moonlight the ford became a mirror; in the dark water he might have seen his face hanging upside down, Jacob inverted in Jabbok: the striver unmasked, the deceiver exposed. The river read him before it renamed him, a play on words that became a work of grace.

“Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed” (Genesis 32:28). The deceiver and heel-grabber became God-wrestler. The supplanter became prince with God. The old was inverted, the new bestowed.

This is the baptismal pattern: we enter the waters with the old name, the old self, the weight of sin, fear and shame. We rise with the new, clothed in Christ, marked as sons and daughters. *“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new”* (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Jacob’s limp became the seal of this transformation. His wound testified to the encounter. The blessing left him marked, no longer self-sufficient but God-dependent. The one who once grasped now leaned.

THE ARCHETYPE OF NEW IDENTITY

In Jacob we see the archetype of new identity. Faith was embodied in Abraham, promise in Isaac, but identity comes to the fore in Jacob. For what matters most is not the name we inherit by birth but the name spoken by God.

The Church fathers often saw the Jabbok as the river of baptism. In its waters, the old self is drowned, and the new emerges. The struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the deep engravings of sin within us (Ephesians 6:12). Baptism is not sentimental ritual for ritual sake but death and rebirth—a wrestling with God that leaves us forever marked.

Jacob teaches us that identity is not seized by ambition, nor secured by manipulation. It is bestowed in encounter, sealed

in struggle, conferred by grace. The blessing is never earned; it is given in the place of surrender.

THE HOUSE OF GOD REVISITED

Earlier Jacob had seen the ladder at Bethel, the house of God, with angels ascending and descending (Genesis 28:12–17). There he vowed allegiance. But at Jabbok the vision became wrestle, the dream became wound. Bethel revealed the glory of God's presence; Jabbok revealed the cost of God's blessing. Together they form the rhythm of identity: revelation and wrestling, promise and transformation.

Israel—God-wrestler—would become the name not of one man but of a people. Through struggle and mercy, Jacob's identity became their inheritance. The people of God are those who contend, who pray, who cling, who weep—and in the end, who are renamed.

LIVING IN THE LEGACY

Jacob's legacy is the legacy of identity transformed in encounter. His story speaks to every soul who wrestles with self and longs for blessing. It tells us that God does not despise our struggle; He meets us in it.

To live in this legacy is to bring our old names into His presence: the deceiver, the fearful, the striver, the ashamed. In confession we speak them aloud. In grace He speaks the new: beloved, chosen, holy, child.

The Church lives in this legacy every time we rise from the waters of baptism, marked with the sign of the cross, bearing a name inscribed in heaven. We limp, but we limp with blessing.

We wrestle, but we wrestle as heirs. We are those who have struggled with God and prevailed, not because we conquered Him, but because He refused to let us go.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

The river mists rise pale in the morning, curling around stones where a long night has ended. Jacob leans on his staff, his hip aching with every shift, yet his mouth shapes a new name: Israel. The Stranger's touch still burns on his sinew, and the blessing still resounds in his chest. He limps toward the light, each step a memory of clinging until dawn, of refusing to let go until the word was spoken. Across the valley Esau waits, and fear still stirs, but it no longer rules. The man who once grasped now walks marked—wounded, renamed, blessed. Every ache is a reminder: God strives with him, and grace holds.

❖ Will you cling to the Lord until His blessing shapes your weakness into strength?

✝ Lord, *I will not let You go unless You bless me* (Genesis 32:26). Strengthen me with might through Your Spirit in the inner man (Ephesians 3:16).