



March 31, 2022

Lessons on the Road from Desperation to Sufficiency

...if I have now found favor in your sight, then receive my present from my hand, inasmuch as I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God, and you were pleased with me. Please, take my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough.” (Genesis. 33:10–11)

One of the fundamental changes that takes place as we move from the faith of desperation to the faith of sufficiency is that we take our minds off ourselves and place them on God. This is what happened to Job. It is interesting to note what Job did not say after seeing God. In almost all the other epiphanies in the Old Testament, when someone saw God they would cry out, “I’ve seen God; now I’m going to die! No man can see God and live!” Not Job. He simply said, “I’ve seen God, and I’ve seen myself.” We cannot truly see ourselves until we see God, but as long as our eyes are fixed on ourselves, we cannot see God. We must focus on God if we are to know the sufficiency of God.

Desperation can help in this regard. There are many examples in the Bible, there is Jacob. Jacob the supplanting deceiver, Jacob the crook. Not an admirable fellow, to be sure. But Jacob loved God. He loved him, and he learned to love—and trust—him more in a time of desperation. He was returning to his father’s house after many years away and learned that his brother, Esau, was coming to greet him with four hundred men. Certain that Esau was going to kill him for having deviously taken his rights as the firstborn son and the blessing of their dying father, Isaac, Jacob sent his herds and his wives and children on ahead to Esau, hoping to soften up his older brother’s heart. Jacob stayed behind in a lonely place, and in his desperation God came to him. ([Genesis 32:24–29](#))

In the ancient Near East, names were reflective of a person’s nature or character. To ask a person his name was like asking, “Who are you? What kind of being are you?” So here we have this being asking Jacob that question, and Jacob asking the same of him. Because of Jacob’s behavior, especially toward his brother, his name came to be associated with “one who displaces another,” a “cheater” or “deceiver.” The “Man” said to him, “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed” (v. 28). From “cheater” to “one who prevails with God”—that is quite a transformation! In some manner, the being revealed himself to Jacob after that, for in verse 30 Jacob says, “I have seen God face to face.”

Jacob, fearful of what his brother might do, had refused to let go of God until he blessed him. It was an act of desperate faith; he had come to the end of his schemes, and all he could do was to trust God (note the attitude) by asking God for a blessing (note the action). God, knowing that some fundamental change had taken place in Jacob, gave him a new name and the requested blessing.

Reflect: *Jacob’s faith had moved from desperation to sufficiency. When he asked God to tell him his name, God’s reply was essentially, “Why do you want to know?” Jacob said no more and moved on with his life, not knowing for sure what would happen with Esau. While it turned out well, he did not know that until later. When they finally met, Esau tried to refuse the generous gifts of servants and livestock that Jacob had brought him. Jacob’s response tells us much about his increased faith. Behold the heart’s confession of the faith of sufficiency: “God has dealt graciously with me, and I have enough.” The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want (Genesis 33:11).*

(Q) In coming to the end of our rope we find ourselves in a place, maybe for the first time, to experience the faithfulness and provision of God in the circumstances of our lives. What are the ways that your schemes, plans, and competencies can get in the way of encountering God as a living reality in your life? Consider how thankfulness to God leads you to take your eyes off yourself so that you can see God more clearly.