

Introduction
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1. Prior passages reveal that at one point Jacob was afraid to meet Esau because he feared he would kill him and his family:
  - a. He had good reason to fear Esau because the last time he saw him—21 years ago—Esau was enraged and intent on killing him for deceptively stealing the familial blessing from him
  - b. As Jacob approached the land of Canaan, he sent word to Esau that he was coming home, but when the servants returned and told him that Esau was coming out to meet him with 400 of his men, Jacob was afraid and distressed (READ 32:7-8)
  - c. His fear was also reflected in his prayer to God for deliverance from Esau (READ 32:11)
  - d. After praying, in an attempt to assuage Esau's anger and gain his favor, he sent Esau a huge contingency of flocks—550 animals (and in three waves for maximum effect)
2. However, it's not clear at this point whether Jacob is still afraid or worried that Esau would kill him and his family:
  - a. As I suggested last week, after Jacob wrestled with God he declared, **"I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been delivered."**
  - b. I proposed that rather than this being a declaration of shock and awe suggested by some English translations, that another possibility is that it was a declaration of confidence:
    - 1) Another viable translation is, **"I have seen God face to face and my life has been (or will be) delivered."**
    - 2) In other words, what Jacob had learned after wrestling with God and receiving His blessing was that God would indeed deliver him from Esau
  - c. Another clue to whether or not Jacob was still afraid that Esau would kill him is found in the fact that prior to wrestling with God he had divided his family into two groups so that if Esau killed one group the other might escape; however, before crossing the river he brought the two groups back together (Genesis 32:22)
3. While I can't say for certain whether or not Jacob was still afraid of meeting Esau (there might have still been at least some trepidation), things turn out quite differently than expected
4. Breakdown:
  - a. Jacob approaches Esau with an attitude of humility and respect
  - b. Esau accepts Jacob with grace and affection
  - c. Jacob shares the LORD's blessings with Esau
  - d. Jacob and Esau part in peace
  - e. God and Jacob fulfill their promises to one another

A. Jacob approached Esau with an attitude of humility and respect (READ 33:1-3)
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1. When Jacob saw Esau at a distance, the first thing he did was separate his immediate family into groups:
  - a. It's not clear why he arranged them in this order (with maidservants in front and Rachel in the back) so we are left to speculate
  - b. The general consensus among Bible scholars seems to be that Jacob was trying to protect those who were most dear to him, Rachel and Joseph, so he put those who were least important in front of them
  - c. I don't know if I buy this because if Esau wanted to kill Jacob and his family I'm not sure how much this would help
2. After separating his family into these groups, Jacob went on ahead of them and approached Esau with a tremendous amount of humility and respect:
  - a. We first see it in his actions (RE-READ 32:3):
    - 1) Bowing down in the ANE was done as a sign of humility and respect, especially to those who were considered superior; it was essentially a way of paying homage
    - 2) Jacob does that in spades here as he approaches Esau; he bows not once but SEVEN times (not all at once but likely bowing, taking steps, bowing, etc.)
    - 3) Some suggest that this was all theatrics by Jacob and simply a means to appease and manipulate Esau, but the context doesn't bear that out; it all seems rather genuine on Jacob's part
  - b. We also see this humility and respect in his words:
    - 1) He repeatedly referred to Esau as his lord and himself as Esau's servant (READ 32:5, 8, 13, 14, 15)
    - 2) We saw him do this earlier when he sent his servants to Esau (RE-READ 32:16-20a)
    - 3) While there may have been some attempt to appease Esau with words like these, the overall sense of the passage is that Jacob's words and actions were genuine

B. Esau accepted Jacob with grace and affection (READ 33:4-7)
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1. Esau's response is a remarkable expression of affection, but grace and maybe even forgiveness:
  - a. He doesn't wait for Jacob to come to him, but rather **"ran to meet him"**
  - b. He wrapped his arms around him and **"embraced him"**
  - c. He even **"fell on his neck and kissed him"**
  - d. And...they both **"wept"**

2. The language here is almost identical to the language Jesus used in the parable of the prodigal son (READ Luke 15:17-24):
  - a. This suggests that Esau's actions may have also been an act of forgiveness toward Jacob and this is certainly supported by the rest of the passage
  - b. As we'll see in a moment, there not so much as a shred of bitterness or resentment on Esau's part toward Jacob throughout the passage
  - c. Furthermore, he apparently saw no need for Jacob to make restitution for stealing his blessing because he initially rejected Jacob's significant gift
  - d. He even offered to lead Jacob on the on the rest of the journey home
  - e. Just as the father's action in the parable indicates he forgave his son, Esau's actions suggest he forgave Jacob and no longer harbored any bitterness or anger toward him

C. Jacob shared God's blessings with Esau (READ 33:8-11)
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1. We know from earlier in chapter 32 that Jacob sent the gifts the Esau in part to soften him up and earn his favor, and that is confirmed here as well:
  - a. Genesis 32:19-20 (READ)
  - b. He repeats something similar here in 33:8: **"And he [Esau] said, 'What do you mean by all these camps which I have met?' And he said, 'To find favor (grace) in the sight of my lord.'"**
2. However, some believe Jacob's actions were also a form of restitution for stealing Esau's blessing and while it's a bit speculative, there might be some merit to it:
  - a. Esau had become wealthy and prosperous in his own right, so he rejected Jacob's gift; however
  - b. However, Jacob insisted he accept it and gave two reasons:
    - 1) The first reason was because Esau had received him with favor—he likened seeing Esau like seeing the face of God (e.g. reflecting God's grace?)
    - 2) The second reason is found in v. 11 and is a little more interesting:
      - a) The word translated **"gift"** or **"present"** in verse 11 is different than the same words in the previous verses
      - b) Here, it's the word **"blessing"** so a more literal translation would be, **"Please take my blessing which has been brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me and because I have plenty."**
      - c) This switch from **"gift"** or **"present"** to **"my blessing"** is interesting because it's the same phrase Esau used to refer to what Jacob had stolen from him (READ 27:36)
  - c. Since the text doesn't specifically state that Jacob's gifts to Esau were a form of restitution for stealing his blessing, the idea is speculative but it wouldn't be out of the realm of possibilities given the overall tone of the passage, Jacob's growth since leaving home, his humble and respectful treatment of Esau, and the use of the word "blessing" here

#### D. Jacob and Esau part in peace (READ 33:12-17)

1. We see two more acts of grace on the part of Esau here:
  - a. The first is his offer to not only accompany Jacob back home but to “**go before**” him (12)—this phrase is often used in the OT to describe protection and that’s likely what is intended here (it may actually be why he came out to meet Jacob with 400 men)
  - b. The second act of grace also relates to protection—after Jacob refused the offer preferring to follow Esau later, Esau offered to leave some of his men behind with Jacob (which Jacob again refuses)
2. There’s a lot of speculation around these verses with many suggesting that Jacob was up to his old tricks again:
  - a. They claim the reason he didn’t want to travel with Esau or allow Esau’s men to stay with him was because he still didn’t trust Esau; but there’s nothing in the text that suggests this, even remotely
  - b. They also claim that Jacob deceived Esau:
    - 1) They claim he deceived Esau with his excuse for staying behind due to the children being weak and him needed to care for nursing herds and flocks—I don’t think there’s much merit to this claim because it was likely true; they had already traveled 450 miles and likely had another 100 to go!
    - 2) They also claim he deceived Esau by saying he would ultimately meet Esau at Seir—I also don’t find much merit to this because it’s quite possible Jacob intended to go to Seir after camping temporarily at Succoth and Shechem; however, after that God commanded him to go to Bethel (35:1)
3. Essentially, what these verses reveal is that Jacob and Esau had resolved their conflict and separated peacefully (however, later passages suggest Esau returned home for a period and lived alongside Jacob before separating after Isaac’s death and returning permanently to Seir; Genesis 36:6-8)

#### E. Takeaways: The LORD and Jacob fulfilled their promises to one another (READ 33:18-20)

1. There are obviously several takeaways we can draw from Jacob’s and Esau’s behavior that should be reflected in our behaviors as Christians:
  - a. Jacob’s deception led to his conflict with Esau, and yet we see in this passage how he approached Esau with humility, respect, and maybe even restitution—all principles we are called to when we wrong someone
  - b. Esau’s remarkable expressions of affection, grace, and forgiveness are also something we are called to when someone sins against us
2. However, if there is one giant, overarching lesson from this passage it’s that both God and Jacob fulfilled their promises to one another

3. God's promise to Jacob when he was forced to flee the land of Canaan was that He would not forsake him and would bring him back home:
  - 1) This promise is found in Genesis 28:10-15 (READ)
  - 2) God made good on the promise, at least in part, and we see this in 33:18 (RE-READ)
  - 3) TEASER: I said "in part" here because God's promise wasn't just to bring Jacob back to the land of Canaan but to his family and we'll look at that next week
4. In response to God's promise, Jacob also made a vow to God:
  - 1) It's found in Genesis 28:18-22
  - 2) We see this partially fulfilled in 33:20 (READ)
    - a) "**El-Elohe-Israel**" means "**God-the God of Israel**"—Israel here isn't the nation of Israel but rather Jacob himself; he was declaring God to be his God
    - b) TEASER: I say this was only a partial fulfillment because, as we'll see next week, Jacob seems to get caught up in Shechem and struggles to completely fulfill this vow