

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 12



JACOB AND ESAU MEET

Scripture Text: Genesis 33; Psalm 133:1

Jacob feared to meet Esau. Sin brings fear. Esau showed forgiveness and generosity. His natural character seems superior to Jacob's. God does not accept man's natural worth (his fleshly traits). God accepts only those changed by His power. Jacob erected an altar where he settled.

Jacob, returning to Canaan from Padanaram, sent messengers ahead to Esau to announce his coming and to seek Esau's favor (**Chapter 32**). They brought word that Esau was coming with four hundred men. **Jacob was greatly afraid**. When he left, twenty years before, Esau was determined to kill him for having taken his birthright by deceit. He sent several large droves of animals as a present to Esau.

MEMORY VERSE: *Behold, How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*

—*Psalm 133:1*

DAILY READINGS:

Mon.—**Psalm 27** Trusting God in time of trouble.

Tue.—**Romans 12** The life transformed by God.

Wed.—**1 Corinthians 1:18-31** The power and wisdom of God.

Thu.—**1 Corinthians 13** The nature of love.

Fri.—**1 John 4:7-21** The love of God banishes fear.

Devotional Reading: Matthew 5:21-26 Peace with fellow men required.

Guilt Brings Fear

Genesis 33:1-2 Jacob . . . looked . . . Esau came, and . . . four hundred men—a frightening sight to Jacob, who knew Esau's reason for revenge. He put his children with their mothers in reverse order of his love for them—**handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindmost**. His favorite wife and son were put in the safest place.

The Wicked flee when no man pursueth (Proverbs 28:1). Jacob had reason to fear Esau, for he knew he had wronged him. Since then, the Lord had entered his life, and he no longer desired to take from Esau. But he had not seen him to establish a rightful brotherly relationship. Awaiting the meeting, Jacob suffered the natural results of his wrongdoing. Sin always brings suffering. God's forgiveness wipes away the greater part of it, yet some natural reaping remains. There is some of it left for us to take care of.

The Happy Meeting

Genesis 33:3-7 He passed over before . . . bowed . . . seven times— did all possible to please his brother. **Esau ran . . .** how Jacob's heart must have leaped within him—**embraced . . . fell on his neck . . . kissed . . . they wept**. Those tears, how different! Esau's joy at seeing again his twin brother. Jacob's, of great relief at seeing friendliness instead of the hatred he feared, and perhaps, of the deep sorrow and repentance of his own. He was thankful that time had erased anger and revenge from Esau's heart. His inner fear had subsided. Esau asked, **Who are those with thee?** Jacob introduces each group as it comes and bows. **The children which God hath graciously given**—he considered them as blessings.

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 12

To Find Grace

Genesis 33:8 What meanest thou by all this drove . . . ?—the animal gifts (**Genesis 32:14,15**). **To find grace**—to win favor, to gain mercy. Esau could feel how deep and fervent was Jacob's desire.

Jacob could not come to Esau demanding his rights. By wrong action, he had forfeited all rights. He hoped only for grace, that Esau would treat him better than he deserved. This is the way we must come to God—seeking His mercy and grace. Sin has canceled any rights we may claim, but thank God! He has sent mercy. We find abundant grace in Jesus.

Esau's Rejection

Genesis 33:9-15 Esau said, **I have enough, my brother**—tenderness, forgiveness, and forgetfulness are here. Generosity was in his voice. *My brother* told Jacob that the breach between them had been closed. **Jacob said . . . receive my present . . . I have seen thy face, as . . . the face of God**—the great relief in Jacob's heart exaggerated Esau's kindness to a likeness of God's. Yet he acknowledged God as the cause of his blessings—**God hath dealt graciously with me**. God had answered his prayer. **He urged him** (Esau), **and he took it** (the gift). No doubt, both Jacob and Esau were sincere.

Esau was rejected by God as the one to carry on the covenant and to father the special nation to which Jesus was to come. Had you and I been choosing, we might have considered Esau's generous forgiving of Jacob, his cordial welcome, and unselfish treatment of him, and concluded that he deserved to be chosen. Indeed, he seems to have a greater, natural bigheartedness than did Jacob. But God does not choose men according to their natural worthiness or good traits. No one **DESERVES** anything from God. He has lumped all mankind together and **concluded all under sin**, so all may receive of His grace (**Galatians 3:22**). **The purpose of God . . . is to stand, not of works, but of him that calleth** (**Romans 9:11**). God looks not at how much of good or bad that the person has done, but at how he responds to God's call.

In human judgment, comparing man with man, we think surely such a one will go to Heaven for his good deeds and generosity. Yet if those deeds proceed from natural, human good nature, they are as **filthy rags** (**Isaiah 64:6**). To be acceptable with God, one's goodness must be produced by the life of God within him. That has a different quality. To be acceptable with God, our old man (self) must die, and we must become a new man in Christ Jesus.

An Altar at Shechem

Genesis 33:16-20 Esau returned to Seir, and Jacob settled at Succoth. **Built him an house . . . booths for his cattle**. His heavy burdens of the past wrongs were now gone, and he was ready to settle down and enjoy the blessings which God had in store for him. Later Jacob moved **to Shalem, a city of Shechem**, in central Canaan. **He erected there an altar**—continued to worship God. The name he gave it—**Elelohe-Israel**—indicates his personal commitment to God. "The situation of the town is one of surpassing beauty. It lies in a sheltered valley, protected by Gerizim on the south and Ebal on the north . . . It is the SYCHAR of **John 4:5,6**, near which the Savior conversed with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well."—Smith's Bible Dict.

Brethren in Unity

Psalm 133:1 **Good and . . . pleasant . . . for brethren to dwell . . . in unity**. This meeting of the brothers is a much more pleasant picture than our previous views of them. Certainly, God was more pleased. His working in the life of Jacob was a big factor in the change, if not its sole cause.

God wills that physical brothers live in harmony. A family bound together in love and unity is a beautiful thing. Even more is it His will that His children, the Church of God, brothers and sisters in the Lord, **dwell together in unity**.