

Apply The Word

www.crosswaypa.org



Message Info

Title:

The Proving Ground
of Faith

Speaker:

Doug Plank

Date:

June 23, 2024

Scriptures:

Genesis 32:1-33:20

Theme: Since our faith must be proven, press on by God and prevail.

Introduction: Assurance of salvation is a common struggle throughout Christian history. How can I know I am saved? The apostle John addressed these concerns directly (1 John 5:13). We are meant to be assured. Here in Gen 32-33, we are brought onto the proving grounds of Jacob's faith. How does he know that he belongs to God?

We can follow Jacob's progress through 3 steps:

1. Pressure applied (32:1-21)

After finally leaving Laban and starting off for home, Jacob meets the angels of God (v. 1), his second such encounter, showing God is with him.

Jacob sends out messengers and finds that Esau is approaching with 400 men—this is ominous news. In the face of this threat, Jacob prays to the Lord.

Turning to the Lord in the midst of fear and distress is the response of God's people. We call upon him and demonstrate our trust in his promises (Ps 62:8).

2. The fight endured (32:22-32)

Jacob sends his family ahead to cross the river and is left alone with the Lord.

That night, the Lord visits in human form and wrestles with Jacob.

The wrestling reveals that Jacob's greatest struggle was with not Laban or Esau, but with God himself. And Jacob perseveres with desperate faith.

At the close, the Lord commends Jacob and renames him *Israel*, "strives with God." Israel's 'victory' was not to beat God, but in not letting go of him, in faith.

3. Compromise averted (33:1-18)

When Israel finally meets Esau, the unexpected happens: Esau greets him warmly. The impending threat is defused. The Lord had changed his heart.

However, Esau also represented a compromise to Israel: if he consented to Esau's plan to reunite, he would be compromising on his commitment to the Lord.

Israel was being confronted with the fear of man: would he compromise and seek to appease Esau, or would he fear and obey the Lord?

Israel stayed faithful and arrived safely at Shechem. There he bought some land and pitched his tent. That land would one day host the Son of God incarnate.

Having proven faith is one of our highest and best aims. Like Israel, we should trust and value the Lord above all others (1 Pet 1:6-7).

Questions:

1. Whose blessing and approval do you most desire? What happiness do you pursue?
2. How is the Lord testing your faith currently?
3. How are you tempted by the fear of man? How can the gospel free you from it?