

The InnerCHANGE

Online Edition for the Cross Point Community



Title: Engaged

Date: 7.11.10

Series: Forefathers

Text: Gen 32

Synopsis: I'm quite sure that each of us has difficult relationships to deal with. Maybe it's a relationship with a child, parent, sibling, or spouse. Or maybe it's a relationship with difficult boss or coworker, the point is, we all got 'em. One of the ways we deal with those difficult relationships is to disengage. We say something like "I'm just not going to fight with them anymore." The problem, of course, is that if we love them we can't just remain disengaged. Inevitable we reinsert ourselves into their lives and all the conflict that comes with it.

This is what is happening as God and Jacob wrestle together. Generations before, after seeing the increasing sinfulness of humanity, God had said, "My Spirit will not contend with man forever." After which, the great flood came, the lifespan of humanity begins to significantly decrease, and God's Spirit, which at one time "hovered" over the entire earth, giving it life, takes on a more transitory nature, appearing only at specific times with specific people. It's this transitory nature of God's Spirit that prompted King David to plead, "Don't take your Holy Spirit from me."

But everything is going change and we begin to see that change with Jacob's mysterious encounter with God at the River of Jabbock. Fearing the impending meeting with his brother Esau, Jacob, in great distress, cries out to God, only to be met by a strange man who wrestles with him throughout the night. During the wrestling match, Jacob prevails against the God-man but is permanently injured in the process. Additionally, Jacob's name is forever changed from "Supplanter" to "Israel" meaning "he struggles with God."

We see a new Jacob emerge, but more importantly, we see a change in God's relationship with humanity. We see a God who reinserts himself into the struggle of mankind. This reinsertion inevitable finds its fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus Christ who was rejected by his own people and killed by them, and yet, it is Jesus who finds ultimate victory, conquering death and sin. Just as Jacob is permanently changed with his struggle with God, so humanity is permanently changed with its encounter with Jesus. He died the death we all deserve to die, the transitory Spirit is now permanently given, God's word is complete, in short, everything has changed. It's what happens when God reinserts himself into a difficult relationship marred by sin and rebellion. Conflict is inevitable but God's arms are wide open as if to say, "C'mon, let's wrestle, I'm here and I'm fully engaged."