

**Introduction:** I remember a signature sports saying from the nineteen-sixties. It was used in all sports, from the violent sport of football, where Vince Lombardi coach of the Green Bay Packers used it often, to the contemplative sport of cross-country running, where our high school coach used it while building his own dynasty. This four word saying was widely accepted as the universal key to success: ‘no pain, no gain’. \*\*\* Over the last sixty years many have tried to take the harsh edges off this saying. But, it is hard to make a case concerning any human endeavor that the best results for any and all people do not come as a result of continual practice and training, requiring people to exercise discipline and accept that this will require some level of discomfort. Again, in all life: ‘no pain, no gain’. \*\*\* This saying applied to Jacob as he prepared to meet his estranged twin brother Esau. He did all he could humanly do to appease his brother and be reconciled to him after taking his birthright. \*\*\* But, the night before the meeting, Jacob wrestled all night with a man who is God. This man is most likely the pre-Bethlehem Savior Jesus. As a result of this encounter, Jacob was made lame, given a new name AND an assurance of deliverance. \*\*\* In the Gospel paragraph, Jesus foreshadowed His own suffering and sacrificial death for many people of all nations. He did this by transforming the Israelite Passover feast into the sacrament of Holy Communion, which is the greatest sacrament for His Church. \*\*\* Let’s now go deeper into God’s Word.

**I. Before meeting his brother, Jacob tells Yahweh he is obeying the command to return and remembers His word to do good to him, now fulfilled; then he is alone all night after sending an offering to Esau. (Genesis 32:9-13, 22-23)**

- A. Before meeting Esau, Jacob reminds Yahweh of His command to return and word to do good to him with descendants; but says he was ‘small’ of all the strong love and truth he has received. (*Genesis 39:9-12*)
1. Then Jacob said: God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, Yahweh saying to me: thou must return to country and your relatives and I will do good to thee. (*Verse 9*)  
**Return:** Jacob begins his prayer reminding Yahweh of His relationship to his family. Then, he reminds Yahweh that He is still commanding Jacob to return to his family AND Yahweh will do good to him (Romans 8:28).
  2. I have been small from all the strong love and from all the truth which Thou have showed to Thy servant; because with my staff I crossed this Jordan and now I have become two camps. (*Verse 10*)  
**Small:** As he waits at the confluence of two rivers, Jacob says he has felt too ‘small’ (little in character) to have received God’s love and truth (Ephesians 4:11-15).  
**Application:** Let us all take comfort to know the smaller we feel before God, the more we can experience His strong life-changing love and truth.
  3. Thou must deliver me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, because I fear him, that he will come and smite me (and) mother in addition to children. (*Verse 11*)  
**Deliver please:** Jacob implores the God of his fathers to deliver him.  
**Fear:** Because he took his brother’s birthright and blessing (Genesis 27:36) and heard Esau has four hundred men with him (verse 6), Jacob fears for his safety and the safety of his family.
  4. And Thou, Thou had said: to do good, I will do good with thee; and, I have made thy descendants as the sand of the sea, which will not be counted for abundance. (*Verse 12*)  
**Word to do good:** In the strongest words possible, Yahweh had stated He would do good for Jacob!  
**Many descendants:** And, in addition, Jacob will have a multitude of descendants.
- B. Jacob spends the night by a deep riverbed, after he took what is coming with him as an offering to his brother, and making to cross over, his family. (*Genesis 39:13, 22-23*)
1. Then he lodged there that night, then he took from ‘coming in his hand’ offering to Esau his brother. (*Verse 13*)  
**Offering:** Jacob had accumulated great wealth in livestock working for his uncle Laban (Genesis 31). In the verses to follow, he sent three waves of gifts to Esau. Even though he has prayed, knowing his character, we wonder is Jacob confusing an ‘offering’ with a bribe?
  2. Then he arose that night, then he took his two wives, his two wives’ servants and his eleven children, then he crossed over the ford of the Jabbok. (*Verse 22*)  
**Took family:** In twenty years with his uncle, Jacob had an unorthodox family to say the least (Genesis 29:15-30:24)!  
**Jabbok:** Jabbok means ‘empty’, an accurate description of Jacob’s soul at this time. It joins the Jordan twelve miles east of Shiloh, twenty miles north of Jericho and thirty miles northeast of Jerusalem.
  3. Then he took them and made them cross over the wadi, and he made it cross over that ‘which to him’. (*Verse 23*)  
**Cross over:** Jacob ‘crossed over’ the ford on three occasions this night, twice here.  
**Wadi:** A wadi is a deep ravine dug by seasonal rivers in the rainy season (mid-November to mid-April), but dry the rest of the year. So this probably happened in springtime.  
**Which to him:** This would include all his livestock that was not part of his offering to Esau.

**II. Jacob wrestles a man who dislodges his hip and changes his name, but gives Jacob his blessing; Jacob acknowledges God has delivered his life; Jesus says: broken bread and cup ARE His Body and Blood. (Genesis 32:24-30; Mark 14:22-26)**

- A. Jacob wrestles a ‘man’ until dawn who was not able over him; then, he put Jacob’s hip out of joint, and Jacob won’t let him go without a blessing. (*Genesis 32:24-26*)
1. Then he was left, Jacob to himself; then, he wrestled ‘man’ until to come up the dawn. (*Verse 24*)  
**Wrestle:** After Jacob was alone, a ‘man’ wrestled with him all night.
  2. Then he (the ‘man’) saw that not he was able to him (Jacob); then he touched the hollow of his thigh, then he put out of joint the hollow of Jacob’s thigh while wrestling him. (*Verse 25*)  
**Not able:** This mysterious ‘man’ was not able to pin Jacob. Scrappy Jacob ‘held his own’.

**Dislocated hip:** As dawn was breaking they were still wrestling. The 'man' (who it turns out is God) dislocated Jacob's hip. Jacob experienced a painful change in his body from wrestling with God.

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3. Then he (the 'man') said: Thou must send (let me go) because has come up the dawn; then, he (Jacob) said: not I will send (let thee go) unless thou have blessed me. (*Verse 26*)

**Requests release:** The 'man' commands Jacob to let him go. He requests a full release.

**Jacob demands blessing:** But Jacob demands he be blessed by the 'man', or he will not comply. It must have dawned on Jacob this man might be God.

- B. When Jacob gives his name, the man changes it because he was able to contend with God, then he blesses Jacob who names the place 'face of God' because his life has been delivered. (*Genesis 32:27-30*)

1. Then he (the 'man') said to him: What is thy name? then, he said : Jacob; Then he (the 'man') said: not Jacob will be called still thy name, but Israel because thou have contended with God and with men and thou were able. (*Verses 27-28*)

**Name is Jacob:** When questioned, Jacob replied he is 'supplanter', or 'heel grabber'. Although Esau was born first, they found Jacob's hand grasping his twin's heel (*Genesis 25:24-26*).

**Name changed:** This 'man', now clearly God (based on his declaration that Jacob contended with God), changes Jacob's name (the essence of his being) to mean 'he will contend or struggle'.

This description will apply to the nation of Israel right up to our current day!

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2. Then Jacob asked: Thou must tell, please, Thy Name; then, He said: Why this? Will thou ask My Name? then, He blessed him there. (*Verse 29*)

**Man's Name:** The 'man' answered a question with two questions. This is exactly what Jesus did in His earthly ministry when He truly had taken on human flesh.

**Blesses Jacob:** In an act of great grace, He honored Jacob's request to bless him.

3. Then he called, Jacob, the name of the place Peniel: For I have seen God 'face-to-face', and has been delivered my soul (life). (*Verse 30*)

**'Face of God':** Peniel is translated: face of God.

**Has been delivered:** Jacob knew he had been delivered from his birth nature by God himself. He had also been given a blessing to carry him through the rest of his life, when he would be reminded of this night, by walking with a limp.

May we realize with Jacob that even when our bodies are broken, we can be fully blessed by God in all the struggles of life.

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- C. Jesus says to them the broken bread and cup ARE His Body and Blood of the covenant poured out for many. (*Mark 14:22-26*)

1. While they (are) eating, having taken bread (and) having blessed, He broke and gave to them, and He said, 'You all must take this, it IS being the Body of Me'. (*Verse 22*)

**Bread:** As Jesus ate Passover with the twelve, He had already taken and blessed, bread. Then He broke (bread) and He gave (it) to them. Jesus did four things with bread: He took, blessed, broke, and gave it to His apostles.

**Command:** He commanded them to take the broken bread.

**Reason:** He said to take because it IS His Body. In the Bible languages it is not necessary to explicitly use the verb 'to be'. He could have said 'this ... My Body'. By explicitly saying 'this IS My Body', He is strongly underlining the equality. Martin Luther made this point when saying he did not disagree with the Roman Catholic position on the Eucharist.

2. And having taken the cup (and) having given thanks (*eu-char-is-tis'*), He gave to them; and, they drank from of it, all; and He said, 'this IS being the Blood of Me of the covenant which is being poured out on behalf of many'. (*Verses 23-24*)

**Cup:** He had already taken cup and given thanks. Then He gave (cup) and they drank (it). Jesus also did four things with cup: He took, gave thanks, gave to, and drank with His apostles.

**My Blood:** Just as with the bread, He said 'this IS My Blood'. Again, He is strongly underlining the equality.

**Shed for many:** This is the best part. His reconciling Blood is not just poured out for Israel as a nation. His Blood of God's Covenant is also poured out for every tribe, language, people and nation (*Revelation 5:9*)! In other words: all biological family clans, all language groups, every culture, and every political entity benefits from Jesus' sacrifice, for whoever will receive and believe (*John 1:12-13*).

**Jesus gave His Body and Blood for many**

3. Amen, I am saying to you all that: No more, no not I may drink from the fruit of the vine until that day when it I may be drinking new in the Kingdom of God. (*Verse 25*)

**No way ever:** Jesus doubles down on the strongest possible language to say He will not drink any grape product.

**Until new:** Not forever, but until He returns and fully establishes His Kingdom on earth.

4. Having sung praise hymns (*Psalms 117-118*), they went out to the Mount of Olives. (*Verse 26*)

**Sing praise hymn:** It was traditional to sing the Hallel (praise) Psalms (113 to 118) at Passover, with the last two at the end of the meal. This is what Jesus did with the eleven who remained to the end.

**Then to ... arrest:** Of course, we now know He was going to His arrest and crucifixion for us.

**Bottom line:** May we always look to Jesus' sacrificial death on our behalf, so we are willing to suffer on behalf of others, knowing Jesus will be glorified in our suffering (*Romans 8:17; 1 Peter 5:9-10*).

**Conclusion:** As Jacob obeys Yahweh's command to return home, he prays about meeting his brother after he did all he could to bring about reconciliation with him. During the night he wrestles with a man who dislocates his hip as dawn approaches.

His name is changed, he receives a blessing, and he acknowledges God's deliverance of him. Some fifteen hundred years later Jesus, the true Israel, says broken bread and a cup ARE His Body and His Blood that He shed for many people.

**Wrestling with God changes people forever**