WEEK OF

JULY 4, 2010

SMALL GROUP BIBLE DISCUSSION

TOPIC: JACOB'S LIMP

Key Scriptures:
Genesis 32:2-31; Proverbs 3:5-6

Points to Make

- Today is July 4, when our neighbours to the south celebrate independence from Britain. They moved to America to enjoy religious freedom – where they could worship God as they felt in their hearts, and not be persecuted. However, the taxes on the goods they imported from Britain kept increasing.
- Since the Americans had no legal representative in Britain, they could not make an official protest; so they made an unofficial one. They dumped a shipment of tea into Boston Harbour, and signed a "Declaration of Independence" from British rule. The Americans won the ensuing war and became "one nation under God".
- Has independence been good for them?
- Somehow, they have lost the religious purity that caused them to leave their homeland.
- God wants us to have and use independence. He made the first humans with the power of choice. In the early days of Israel's nationhood, He had Joshua give the people an all-important choice – "choose you this day whom ye will serve" (Josh. 24:15).
- God expected the children of Israel to use this power of choice, but He also let them know what was required in order to receive His blessing.
- They did not always make the right choices, and they endured the consequences, just as God told them they would. Proverbs 3:5-6 tells us "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy path".
- Because God has given us the ability to reason, we sometimes feel self-sufficient. God has to remind us that we are nothing without Him.
- While she was pregnant, God told Rebekah that the younger twin she would bear would be greater than his firstborn brother (Gen. 25:23).
- As they grew, it became evident that Jacob had more desire for the things of God than his brother Esau who was willing to give up his birthright in exchange for some food. (Gen. 25:29- 34).
- When the opportunity arose, Jacob and Rebekah deceived Isaac into giving Jacob the blessing that was rightfully Esau's.
- Esau vowed to kill Jacob who fled to his uncle Laban, where Jacob learned how it felt to be the victim, in circumstances where only God could help him.
- After Jacob had a family and enough riches to support them, God told him to return home and he obeyed.

Sermon in a Sentence:
Cast your burden on the Lord and He will sustain you.

- Then came the big test. Jacob dutifully sent word to Esau that he was returning home, and his messengers came back with the news that Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred men.
- Jacob panicked (Gen. 32: 7). He remembered Esau's vow.
- When we panic we can't think straight. Jacob tried to do everything to save himself and his household from death.
- Finally, he did what was really necessary; he decided to spend time alone with God.
- Suddenly a man appeared, and began to wrestle with him. Then came the revelation – God had come to him in an unusual way, and made it clear that some things are only possible by the power of God. Jacob began to ask for what he really needed; the blessing of God.
- Just to remind him of his frailty, God left Jacob with a limp from the disjointed thigh he received while wrestling with the stranger .
- How often has God put your thigh out of joint to make you trust in him with all your heart?
- If you have never tried casting your burdens on the Lord Jesus, now is the time to renew or establish your dependency on God, the only One who never fails.

Discussion Tools

- Reread Proverbs 3:5-6. Do we always pay attention to this advice?
- Discuss what you think motivated Rebekah to go to such lengths to obtain Esau's birthright for Jacob.
- Jacob was left with a limp as a reminder of his frailty. Is there anything in your life today that reminds you of your need for God?

Prayer Time

Mighty God with you, nothing is impossible. Help me to remember the circumstances that have brought me to this point in my relationship with you.

ICE-BREAKER: What is the historical dumping of tea into the Boston Harbour known as?

NOTES