

# Jacob Makes Peace with Esau

*Persistent Commitment to Peace*

Dr. Goodluck Ofoegbu  
Banking Blessings Ministry  
San Antonio, Texas  
USA


## What We Will Learn

- Jacob's commitment to make peace with his twin brother
- He was determined to make peace even when a hostile confrontation appeared likely
- Based on Genesis 32:3–21 and 33:1–20

# Jacob's Peace Message to Esau

- Jacob sent emissaries to Esau with message of peace
- He humbled himself
  - Referred to Esau as master
  - Referred to himself as servant
- He has been staying with Laban until then
- Genesis 32:3–4






## Genesis 32 (NIV)

3 Jacob sent messengers ahead of him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom.

4 He instructed them: "This is what you are to say to my master Esau: 'Your servant Jacob says, I have been staying with Laban and have remained there till now.

# Jacob's Peace Message cont'd

- He has become wealthy with cattle and donkeys, sheep and goats, menservants and maidservants
- He was sending the message to seek favor with Esau
- The messengers reported that Esau was coming with four hundred men
- Genesis 32:5–6



## Genesis 32 (NIV)


5 I have cattle and donkeys, sheep and goats, menservants and maidservants. Now I am sending this message to my lord, that I may find favor in your eyes.' "

6 When the messengers returned to Jacob, they said, "We went to your brother Esau, and now he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him."



# Jacob Feared Esau's Intention

- Jacob divided his people and flocks into two groups so one could escape if necessary
- Then he prayed
- Oh God of my fathers, You told me to go back to my country and my relatives and you will make me prosper
- Genesis 32:7–9




## Genesis 32 (NIV)

7 In great fear and distress Jacob divided the people who were with him into two groups, and the flocks and herds and camels as well.

8 He thought, "If Esau comes and attacks one group, the group that is left may escape."

9 Then Jacob prayed, "O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, O LORD, who said to me, 'Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper,'





## Genesis 32 (NIV)

10 I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant. I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two groups.

11 Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children.

12 But you have said, 'I will surely make you prosper and will make your descendants like the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted.' "

# Jacob's Prayer cont'd

## Genesis 32:10–12


- I am unworthy of your kindness and faithfulness
- I had nothing when I left, but have become two groups
- Save me from my brother, Esau
- You promised to make me prosper and multiply my descendants like the sand of the sea



# Droves of Gifts for Esau

- Jacob selected herds of animals for Esau
- He placed a servant in charge of each herd
- He sent them ahead in separate droves
- Each servant will present the gift to Esau
- Jacob hoped to pacify Esau with the gift
- Genesis 32:13–16 & 17–21






## Genesis 32 (NIV)

13 He spent the night there, and from what he had with him he selected a gift for his brother Esau:

14 two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams,

15 thirty female camels with their young, forty cows and ten bulls, and twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys.

16 He put them in the care of his servants, each herd by itself, and said to his servants, "Go ahead of me, and keep some space between the herds."



## Genesis 32 (NIV)

17 He instructed the one in the lead: "When my brother Esau meets you and asks, 'To whom do you belong, and where are you going, and who owns all these animals in front of you?'

**18** then you are to say, 'They belong to your servant Jacob. They are a gift sent to my lord Esau, and he is coming behind us.' "

19 He also instructed the second, the third and all the others who followed the herds: "You are to say the same thing to Esau when you meet him.

20 And be sure to say, 'Your servant Jacob is coming behind us.' " For he thought, "I will pacify him with these gifts I am sending on ahead; later, when I see him, perhaps he will receive me."


21 So Jacob's gifts went on ahead of him, but he himself spent the night in the camp.



# Jacob Prepares to Meet Esau

- Jacob saw Esau approaching
- He separated the family into three groups
- Two maidservants and their children in front
- Followed by Leah and her children
- Rachel and Joseph followed behind
- Jacob went in front ahead of his family
- Genesis 33:1–3





## Genesis 33 (NIV)

1 Jacob looked up and there was Esau, coming with his four hundred men; so he divided the children among Leah, Rachel and the two maidservants.


2 He put the maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph in the rear.

3 He himself went on ahead and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother.

# Jacob Meets Esau in Peace

- Jacob bowed seven times as he approached Esau
- He and Esau met and embraced in peace
- The rest of the family bowed for Esau as they met
- Genesis 33:3–7





## Genesis 33 (NIV)

3 He himself went on ahead and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother.

4 But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept.

5 Then Esau looked up and saw the women and children. "Who are these with you?" he asked. Jacob answered, "They are the children God has graciously given your servant."


6 Then the maidservants and their children approached and bowed down.

7 Next, Leah and her children came and bowed down. Last of all came Joseph and Rachel, and they too bowed down.



# Jacob and Esau Depart in Peace

- Jacob persuaded Esau to accept the gifts
- Esau offered to accompany Jacob home
- However, Jacob declined
- Esau departed with his men back to Seir
- Jacob went in a different direction
- He settled near Shechem in Canaan
- Genesis 33:8–11, 12–15, & 16–20



## Genesis 33 (NIV)


8 Esau asked, "What do you mean by all these droves I met?" "To find favor in your eyes, my lord," he said.

9 But Esau said, "I already have plenty, my brother. Keep what you have for yourself."

10 "No, please!" said Jacob. "If I have found favor in your eyes, accept this gift from me. For to see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favorably.

11 Please accept the present that was brought to you, for God has been gracious to me and I have all I need." And because Jacob insisted, Esau accepted it.





## Genesis 33 (NIV)


12 Then Esau said, "Let us be on our way; I'll accompany you."

13 But Jacob said to him, "My lord knows that the children are tender and that I must care for the ewes and cows that are nursing their young. If they are driven hard just one day, all the animals will die.

14 So let my lord go on ahead of his servant, while I move along slowly at the pace of the droves before me and that of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir."

15 Esau said, "Then let me leave some of my men with you." "But why do that?" Jacob asked. "Just let me find favor in the eyes of my lord."





## Genesis 33 (NIV)

16 So that day Esau started on his way back to Seir.

17 Jacob, however, went to Succoth, where he built a place for himself and made shelters for his livestock. That is why the place is called Succoth.

18 After Jacob came from Paddan Aram, he arrived safely at the city of Shechem in Canaan and camped within sight of the city.

19 For a hundred pieces of silver, he bought from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, the plot of ground where he pitched his tent.

20 There he set up an altar and called it El Elohe Israel.

# Jacob's Commitment to Peace

- He was determined to make peace with Esau even when Esau appeared to be coming with hostility
- First, he anticipated the worst and divided his people and flocks into two groups so at least one might escape
- Second, he prayed God to save him from his brother



# Jacob's Commitment to Peace cont'd

- Third, he placed droves of gift on his way, hoping to pacify him with the gifts
- Fourth, he bowed seven times as he approached Esau



# Why Jacob Committed to Peace

- Jacob maybe believed that peace was his only option to preserve his family's destiny
- Maybe he was motivated by the successful peace settlement with Laban
- Maybe he realized that making peace with his brother was worth any sacrifice

# Jacob's Approach to Peace

- Jacob prayed for protection from his brother
- He continued to “work” for protection
- Faith by itself, if not accompanied by action, is dead [James 2:17]



# How Did Jacob's Commitment Affect the Outcome?

- We don't know Esau's original intention
- It's possible he set out to make peace with his brother
- It's also possible Jacob's actions changed his mind from an initially different intention



# What We Learned

- Commitment to peace
- State of mind in a family dispute
- Live at peace with everyone
  - If it is possible (i.e., explore every possibility)
  - As far as it depends on you (i.e., do your part irrespective of the other party)
  - [Romans 12:18]