

These three words are not specifically mentioned in Genesis 32-33. But they are demonstrated in the actions of Jacob and Esau. In Genesis 32 and 33 we read of Jacob's repentance. His repentance was preceded by God's mercy... who had dealt graciously with Jacob... in ways he didn't deserve.

Up until his return to Canaan... Jacob had resorted to manipulation in order to bring about by his own efforts and means what God had told his mom when he and his brother were still in her womb.

Genesis 25:23

Two nations are in your womb,
and two peoples from within you will be separated;
one people will be stronger than the other,
and the older will serve the younger.

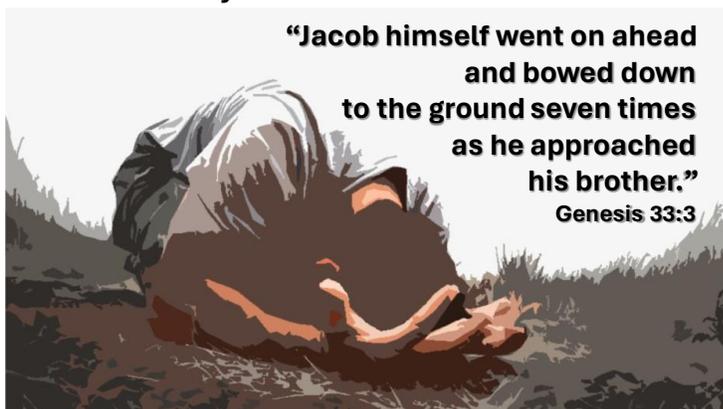
At the place where the angels of God had met him, the place Jacob named Mahanaim, there alongside the Jabbok River, where God himself had wrestled with him.... Jacob repented.

He changed his mind about the sinfulness of his sin.
He changed his mind about who God is – the mighty One who could not be deceived, manipulated nor controlled... the mighty One who would fulfill in unforeseen ways the promises he had made to Jacob.

The evidence of Jacob's repentance was that he first sent messengers to his brother, 32:3-5.

And when those messengers returned and told him that Esau was coming to him... in spite of his fear, Jacob demonstrated his repentance by walking out in front of his family, putting his life into the hands of God.

As Jacob walked towards Esau, he did so, not with arrogance, but with humility.



**“Jacob himself went on ahead
and bowed down
to the ground seven times
as he approached
his brother.”
Genesis 33:3**

As Jacob put his trust in the LORD... he experienced what Isaiah would testify to... centuries later...

Isaiah 30:15
In repentance and rest
is your salvation,
in quietness and trust
is your strength...

Repentance is a beautiful word because in the gospel we hear the good news that our sin is not irrevocable – God is able to save the worst... in Christ our destiny can be changed.

Let's press into the second beautiful word.



After Jacob deceived his father and stole his brother's blessing, Genesis 28:41 says – **“Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him.”**

As he held onto that grudge offense took root and bitterness and hatred grew in Esau's heart.... until ... he told himself, Genesis 27:41 ... **“The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob.”**

From Genesis 27 to 33, the story is focused not on Esau, but Jacob.

The reader is not told whether Esau had changed his mind about killing Jacob, or if he still held a grudge.

Jacob had sent messengers to Esau, because he desired Esau's forgiveness, but he did so unsure of what Esau would do. As the two brothers approached each other, v.4a says...

Genesis 33:4

"But Esau ran to meet Jacob..."

Twenty years earlier ...Jacob had run... from Esau. Now... Esau ran... to him... but not as a warrior approaches an enemy, with the intent to strike them down.

v.4b says...

Genesis 33:4

"But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him..."

What Jacob had done 20 years earlier had pushed... Esau... away. But once he was near to Jacob, Esau didn't maintain a safe distance, wary of what new deception Jacob might attempt. Rather Esau drew Jacob near to him... he embraced him.

v.4c says...

Genesis 33:4

“But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck...”

This is not the greeting of strangers, polite and reserved.
This is a greeting reserved for family.

v.4d says...

Genesis 33:4

“But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him.”

Esau’s kiss was not like Judas’ kiss of Jesus that was actually a kiss of betrayal.

This kiss was sincere in the love and affection it communicated.

v.4e says...

Genesis 33:4

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

The passage provides no commentary as to why the brothers wept.

But we know that people who have been physically separated or who've been estranged for an extended period of time will weep tears of joy when that long season of apartness is finally over.

There is no question – this was a warm welcome.

While the word forgive is not used, what Esau did communicated that he held no grudge towards Jacob; but that he had forgiven him. Forgiveness is...

**Forgiveness:
the act of pardoning an offender.**

**In the Bible,
the word translated “forgiveness”
literally means “to let go”,
to not demand payment for a debt
or compensation for hurt or loss suffered.**

Genesis 33 does not reveal the means which God used as he worked in Esau's life.

But the evidence of God at work in Esau is unmistakable. Offense had given way to forgiveness.

This is why Jacob said to Esau, v.10b –

“To see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favorably.”

Jacob had just wrestled all night with an unknown man.

And when he realized that it was God he had struggled with... that he had seen God face to face... Jacob was left in awe and gratitude, **because God had mercifully spared his life.**

Similarly, as Esau ran to him, embraced him and kissed him, it was gloriously obvious... that Esau too had mercifully spared his life.

The extending of forgiveness ...by the one who has been offended... **lifts off** of the offender... the burden of their guilt.

Forgiveness **releases** the offender from the debt of their sin because the one granting forgiveness... chooses to pay that debt.

Again centuries later the prophet Isaiah would write of this beautiful word, forgiveness and say..

Isaiah 61:1-2

**The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor....**

Forgiveness is never cheap or inconsequential, but always costly, and always sweet.

Charles Spurgeon wrote...

To be forgiven is such sweetness that honey is tasteless in comparison with it.
But yet there is one thing sweeter still, and that is to forgive.

As it is more blessed to give than to receive, so to forgive rises a stage higher in experience than to be forgiven.

Charles Spurgeon

The word forgive is a beautiful gospel word.

Do you realize in the story Jesus told of two sons – the one who left home and the one who stayed... that the father in the story did the same thing as Esau?

After the prodigal son came to his senses, and repented of his sin, he set out for home.

His father, who had been watching for him, didn't wait for his son to come to him, rather he ran to his son, just like Esau.

And just like Esau, he... threw his arms around his son and kissed him.

Luke 15:20

While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.



The father's actions communicated to the son his forgiveness.

The proof that the father forgave the son his debt was evidenced by the fact that the boy was welcomed home as a son and not a slave.

Our sin is not irrevocable because the grace of God is greater than our sin; as far as the east is from the west, so far has God removed our sin.

The third beautiful word revealed in Genesis 33 is...



Reconciliation assumes a broken relationship. Forgiveness willingly pays the offender's debt, which makes possible the repairing of a broken relationship.

Jacob and Esau had been adversaries... all their lives. But because Jacob repented, and Esau forgave him, the brothers could be reconciled.

Yes, Esau went back to Seir... because as Deuteronomy 2:5 says, the LORD had given to him the hill country of Seir. Canaan was not Esau's heritage.



Deuteronomy 2:5
"I have given
Esau the hill
country of Seir
as his own."

Jacob journeyed into Canaan, because this was the land which God had promised to him and his father and his grandfather.

I remind you again of what the LORD had told Rebekah, while she carried Esau and Jacob in her womb...

Genesis 25:23
The LORD said to Rebekah,
Two nations
are in your womb,
and two peoples
from within you
will be separated;
one people will be stronger than the other,
and the older will serve the younger.

Jacob and Esau did become two nations.

They were two peoples separated from one another by the Jordan River, but they were not estranged.

This story impresses upon us the truth God has revealed in his word: reconciliation is a work of his grace.

When reconciliation happens between two human parties... as it did with Jacob and Esau... we ask in awe... who but God could have brought this about???

But when reconciliation happens between a person and the triune God... here we fall to our knees in worship... who but God could bring us back to himself???

Salvation is of the LORD.. it is He who closes the gap; who bridges the divide; that exists between himself and the fallen sons and daughters of Adam and Eve.

With Jacob and Esau the order was... repentance... forgiveness... reconciliation.

But in the gospel of Jesus, it is God who acted first to reconcile us to himself... while we were his enemies... while we were spiritually dead in our sin.

For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

Romans 5:10

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And how did God reconcile us to himself?

Through the death of his Son.

In the death of Jesus we see God assuming our spiritual debt.

2 Corinthians 5

All this is from God,
who reconciled us to himself through Christ...
God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ,
not counting people's sins against them...
We implore you on Christ's behalf:
be reconciled to God.
God made him who had no sin to be sin for us,
so that in him we might become
the righteousness of God.

At the heart of all brokenness, the source of all angst in this world, is humanity's separation from the triune God.

Life without God leaves us empty, thirsty, hungry.

Life without God leave us under condemnation.

Life without God leave us hopeless... we cannot save ourselves.

But God made him who had no sin to be sin for us in order that his righteousness might be credited to us.
The grace of God provided this glorious exchange.

This is the gospel of Jesus... summed up in three beautiful gospel words....



Our sin is not irrevocable.
Our God has paid our debt in Jesus Christ.
He did so in order to reconcile us to himself.

This is the gospel we live in.
This is the gospel I invite you to trust in.