August 1, 2017

Prison Ministry

**Story of Redemption** (1947) Chapter **13: Jacob and the Angel**

 JACOB'S wrong in receiving his brother's blessing by fraud was again brought forcibly before him, and he was afraid that God would permit Esau to take his life. In his distress he prayed to God all night. An angel was represented to me as standing before Jacob, presenting his wrong before him in its true character. As the angel turns to leave him, Jacob lays hold of him, and will not let him go. He makes supplications with tears. He pleads that he has deeply repented of his sins and the wrongs against his brother, which had been the means of separating him from his father's house for twenty years. He ventures to plead the promises of God and the tokens of His favor to him from time to time in his absence from his father's house.

 All night Jacob wrestled with the angel, making supplication for a blessing. The angel seemed to be resisting his prayer, by continually calling his sins to his remembrance, at the same time endeavoring to break away from him. Jacob was determined to hold the angel, not by physical strength, but by the power of living faith. In his distress Jacob referred to the repentance of his soul, the deep humility he had felt for his wrongs. The angel regarded his prayer with seeming indifference, continually making efforts to release himself from the grasp of Jacob. He might have exercised his supernatural power and forced himself from Jacob's grasp, but he did not choose to do this.

 But when he saw that he prevailed not against Jacob, to convince him of his supernatural power, he touched his thigh, which was immediately out of joint. But Jacob would not give up his earnest efforts for bodily pain. His object was to obtain a blessing, and pain of body was not sufficient to divert his mind from his object. His determination was stronger in the last moments of the conflict than at the beginning. His faith grew more earnest and persevering until the very last, even till the breaking of the day. He would not let go his hold of the angel until he blessed him. "And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." The angel then inquired, "What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed."

**Prevailing Faith**

 Jacob's persevering faith prevailed. He held fast the angel until he obtained the blessing he desired, and the assurance of the pardon of his sins. His name was then changed from Jacob, the supplanter, to Israel, which signifies a prince of God. "And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." It was Christ that was with Jacob through that night, with whom he wrestled, and whom he perseveringly held until He blessed him.

 The Lord heard the supplications of Jacob, and changed the purposes of Esau's heart. He did not sanction any wrong course which Jacob pursued. His life had been one of doubt, perplexity, and remorse because of his sin, until his earnest wrestling with the angel, and the evidence he there obtained that God had pardoned his sins.

 "Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed. He wept, and made supplication unto Him: He found him in Bethel, and there He spake with us; even the Lord God of hosts; the Lord is his memorial." Hosea 12:4, 5.

 Esau was marching against Jacob with an army, for the purpose of killing his brother. But while Jacob was wrestling with the angel that night, another angel was sent to move upon the heart of Esau in his sleeping hours. In his dream he saw Jacob in exile from his father's house for twenty years, because he was afraid of his life. And he marked his sorrow to find his mother dead. He saw in his dream Jacob's humility and angels of God around about him. He dreamed that when they met he had no mind to harm him. When Esau awoke he related his dream to his four hundred men and told them that they must not injure Jacob, for the God of his father was with him. And when they should meet Jacob, not one of them should do him harm.

 "And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. . . . And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him; and they wept." Jacob entreated Esau to accept a peace offering, which Esau declined, but Jacob urged him: "Take, I pray thee, my blessing that is brought to thee; because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough. And he urged him, and he took it."

**An Object Lesson**

 Jacob and Esau represent two classes: Jacob, the righteous, and Esau, the wicked. Jacob's distress when he learned that Esau was marching against him with four hundred men, represents the trouble of the righteous as the decree goes forth to put them to death, just before the coming of the Lord. As the wicked gather about them, they will be filled with anguish, for, like Jacob, they can see no escape for their lives. The angel placed himself before Jacob, and he took hold of the angel and held him and wrestled with him all night. So also will the righteous, in their time of trouble and anguish, wrestle in prayer with God, as Jacob wrestled with the angel. Jacob in his distress prayed all night for deliverance from the hand of Esau. The righteous in their mental anguish will cry to God day and night for deliverance from the hand of the wicked who surround them.

 Jacob confessed his unworthiness: "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast shewed unto Thy servant." The righteous in their distress will have a deep sense of their unworthiness and with many tears will acknowledge their utter unworthiness and, like Jacob, will plead the promises of God through Christ, made to just such dependent, helpless, repenting sinners.

 Jacob took firm hold of the angel in his distress and would not let Him go. As he made supplication with tears, the angel reminded him of his past wrongs and endeavored to escape from Jacob, to test and prove him. So will the righteous, in the day of their anguish, be tested, proved, and tried, to manifest their strength of faith, their perseverance and unshaken confidence in the power of God to deliver them.

 Jacob would not be turned away. He knew that God was merciful, and he appealed to His mercy. He pointed back to his past sorrow for, and repentance of, his wrongs, and urged his petition for deliverance from the hand of Esau. Thus his importuning continued all night. As he reviewed his past wrongs he was driven almost to despair. But he knew that he must have help from God, or perish. He held the angel fast and urged his petition with agonizing, earnest cries, until he prevailed.

 Thus will it be with the righteous. As they review the events of their past lives, their hopes will almost sink. But as they realize that it is a case of life or death they will earnestly cry unto God, and appeal to Him in regard to their past sorrow for, and humble repentance of, their many sins, and then will refer to His promise, "Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me." Isaiah 27:5. Thus will their earnest petitions be offered to God day and night. God would not have heard the prayer of Jacob and mercifully saved his life if he had not previously repented of his wrongs in obtaining the blessing by fraud.

 The righteous, like Jacob, will manifest unyielding faith and earnest determination, which will take no denial. They will feel their unworthiness but will have no concealed wrongs to reveal. If they had sins, unconfessed and unrepented of, to appear then before them, while tortured with fear and anguish, with a lively sense of all their unworthiness, they would be overwhelmed. Despair would cut off their earnest faith, and they could not have confidence to plead with God thus earnestly for deliverance, and their precious moments would be spent in confessing hidden sins and bewailing their hopeless condition.

 The period of probation is the time granted to all to prepare for the day of God. If any neglect the preparation and heed not the faithful warnings given, they will be without excuse. Jacob's earnest, persevering wrestling with the angel should be an example for Christians: Jacob prevailed because he was persevering and determined.

 All who desire the blessing of God, as did Jacob, and will lay hold of the promises, as he did, and be as earnest and persevering as he was, will succeed as he succeeded. There is so little exercise of true faith and so little of the weight of truth resting upon many professed believers because they are indolent in spiritual things. They are unwilling to make exertions, to deny self, to agonize before God, to pray long and earnestly for the blessing, and therefore they do not obtain it. That faith which will live through the time of trouble must be daily in exercise now. Those who do not make strong efforts now to exercise persevering faith, will be wholly unprepared to exercise that faith which will enable them to stand in the day of trouble.

Next Mailing: Story of Redemption Chapter **14: The Children of Israel**