

JACOB PRESERVED

A SERMON

Preached on Lord's Day Morning March 6th, 1859

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“Jacob have I loved; but Esau have I hated.” Romans 9:13

THE people of God are called “the seed of Abraham,” because they are partakers of the same discriminating grace; they are called “the seed of Isaac,” because they are objects of the same yea and amen promise; and they are called “the seed of Jacob,” because they are loved with the same love, taught by the same Spirit, and shall certainly come to the same end. And some of the greatest promises, and most pleasing and delightful revelations are made to us, under this relationship, the seed of Jacob. “Fear not you, worm Jacob, and you men of Israel.” Again, “Thus says the Lord that created you, O Jacob, and he that formed you, O Israel; fear not, for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name; you are mine.” Thus, all through the Scriptures, you will find, that just as the Lord dealt with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, so he will deal with his people, down to the end of time. If we, therefore, are partakers of the same grace; if we are interested in the same promises, and if we are loved with the same love, then we shall bear those likenesses to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, which will prove the same. So that I shall have, this morning, again to set before you, a little more of the character of Jacob, in order that we may compare ourselves with him, and compare him with ourselves. And I hope and trust the Lord will enable us to read, this morning, somewhat clearly, our interest in that love wherewith Jacob was loved; though, as some of you are aware, in the day in which we live, we have in books first, and then afterwards, in printed sermons, most terrible testimonies against poor Jacob; he was wrong, it is said, in his conduct before he met Esau; he was wrong in making a present to Esau; he did not at all appreciate the mercies of the Lord; and that so far from his wrestling with God, he did not wrestle with God at all, but God wrestled with him to get his hollowness out of him, and did not get it out of him, after all; and that he had no business to stay at Succoth, he was wrong there; and indeed, wrong altogether; he was a mere stultified, besotted man: that there was not a redeeming trait in his character. Such is the representation given by duty-faith men, both in books and printed sermons; and the secret of it all is this, that these men know not wherein laid the excellency of Jacob's character, and not being able to find in Jacob what they want to serve their own purposes, he is very much in their way, and they are rather grieved that God did not love Esau instead of Jacob, he being rather the better man of the two. Such is the leaven of hypocrisy which is working in the day in which we live. However, if we are spared till next Lord's-day morning, I shall then have to set before you the character of Esau; and in so doing, I shall have to point out where Jacob was

wrong. I will take his part as well as I can: for he is an old friend of mine; but I shall not take his part where he was wrong. I will confess where he is wrong; but I will, at the same time, find a remedy; and I think that is the business of every real friend. The Lord never did, and he never will, find fault with his people, without at the same time finding a remedy; and therefore, let us be followers of the Lord our God, in that as well as in other matters. Well, last Lord's-day morning, we found Jacob at Bethel. I think we may, perhaps, comprehend all we have to say this morning, under the head of *preservation*, the Lord preserved him; the Lord at Bethel, as we read in Genesis 28, brought Jacob into fellowship in eternal things by the revelation he made to him; and in that revelation into which the Lord brought him, there the Lord kept him; that is, the Lord brought him into the truth, he kept him in the truth; there Jacob lived, there Jacob walked with God, there Jacob had fellowship with God, there Jacob died; and there Jacob is now. With all that people say against Jacob, I am not at all ashamed publicly to confess, that I have a much better opinion of Jacob after all, than of those that speak against him.

We have then, to notice THE LORD'S CARE IN PRESERVING JACOB; and in so doing, I will first notice *his prayer to God, when he was about to meet Esau*; and then I will notice *the answer which the Lord gave to that prayer*.

Frist: First, we notice the *prayer*. His meeting Esau was, you are aware, 20 years after the revelation the Lord made to him at Bethel; and Jacob was a humble man; that is, he was conscious of what he was as a sinner; and he would not be presumptuous, he did not feel that he had so much confidence to meet Esau as he could wish; he did not feel so sure that the Lord would be with him as he could wish; he did not feel so sure as he could wish that the Lord would deliver him. Well, this perhaps may be a weakness, and a very bad weakness too, if it had caused Jacob to run away from the truth, and to run away from God. But what did this want of faith do; what did this want of assurance do? It brought Jacob to just where the Lord brings us, by withholding from us that full assurance, by withholding from us that fixedness of hope, and by withholding from us his grace in one respect, that he may minister grace to us more conspicuously in another respect. And therefore, when Jacob felt that he was lacking in his faith, he did that that was admirable. And what did he do? Why, he did what the apostle James exhorts us to do, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that gives to all liberally, and upbraids not; only let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." Jacob did not waver as to God's truth. The Lord help you to do as Jacob did; and he did as the apostle exhorts us to do, and what another Scripture exhorts, "Let your requests be made known unto God by prayer and supplication." And just mark the spirit; mark the successive parts of his prayer; what are they? When Jacob prayed, he prayed in new covenant relationship. He begins with saying, "O God of my Father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac." Well, it is twenty years ago the Lord met you there Jacob. Yes, 20 years ago, when he was the God of Bethel, he brought me into the same spiritual covenant that he brought my father Abraham into, that he brought my father Isaac into; and therefore, upon these grounds, Lord, upon this new covenant ground, upon this eternal priesthood ground; for herein is the eternal priesthood of Christ, upon this yea and amen ground; on this free grace relationship; here it is that he falls down before the Lord. "O God of my Father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac." And there is something very pleasing in the thought that for twenty years he is thus preserved, still standing in the truth, still standing where his father Abraham and his father Isaac stood, still standing fast in the truth as it was in Jesus. And then, the next step he takes is to plead the Lord's own promise "The Lord which said unto me, return unto your country, and to your kindred; and I will deal well with you." Lord,

you have given me this promise, and yet I seem to want it renewed. Lord, I am afraid lest I should presume; I am afraid lest I should be impudent and presumptuous; lest my confidence should be carnal and daring; and therefore, I desire, Lord, that you would renew your token, and again manifest yourself. And is it not just so with us? Do you mean to say, my hearers, that past manifestations satisfy you without any more manifestations? Do you mean to say, that the word having been a comfort to you in times past; perfectly satisfies you without a renewal of that comfort? Do you mean to say that you always feel that full assurance which you did when the word first came to you in power? No. Then, where is our remedy? Why, that of prayer, where Jacob's was. Yet books and printed sermons represent him as a besotted sort of man, utterly incapable of appreciating the grace of God. Jacob's language is I am sure expressive of the inmost feeling of every soul that is born of God, "O Lord, I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which you have showed unto your servant; for with my staff, I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands." So that here was a sight and sense of what he was, "Not worthy of the least of all the mercies and truth." There is an allusion to God's eternal truth, to everlasting truth, to his gospel truth, his new covenant truth, "which you have showed to your servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan," when I fled for my life from Esau; and had you not interposed, I had lost my life; but you have taken care of me all this time; and Laban has changed my wages ten times; yet you have been with me, you have taken care of me; not Lord, because of any good in me, for I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which you have shown to your servant. Then after this, Jacob pleads with the Lord, and he honestly tells the Lord what he is afraid of. He says, "I fear my brother Esau;" and Jacob we shall presently see was alone. There are many things we may not feel exactly disposed to confess before men; if you are afraid of your enemy, it is not worth telling him so; you had much better go and tell the Lord; that's the best plan, depend upon it. Well, he did not go to Esau and say, I am afraid of you. He wishes to meet Esau on friendly terms; he wishes to be delivered from Esau's wrath, and therefore, he told God. It's the best place in the world to carry your secrets and troubles to; Jacob knew he could speak freely there; he knew the Lord understood all about it. "I fear my brother Esau." But then the promise comes in again, "You said, I will surely do you good." Well, then, here is the prayer. Now the question arises, did the Lord hear this prayer? Did the Lord answer this prayer? I am concerned to make that matter clear; and I am equally concerned to make something else clear; and that is, have we been led to pray to the Lord in the same manner that Jacob did? I say nothing of the words; we may pray in the same spirit as he did without using any of the words that he used; it is not words, but the spirit. Then the question is whether we can follow him in the answer, whether we know anything of the Lord's answering prayer, or not. Now, after Jacob prayed in this way, before the answer came, he began to think of using means. He provided and prepared a present to send to Esau, to appease him. But books and printed sermons abuse Jacob most dreadfully for this. Why did he adopt that plan? Why did he send a present to appease Esau? Why did he not leave it with God? Why did he fall back upon his own plan? for it was, say they, nothing else. Why, do these men never have any plans? I never could see that Jacob was wrong in sending a present to Esau to pacify him. I am not sure that the Lord did not direct him to do so. I believe that the Lord very often works by common laws and common modes in order to hide from the ungodly, his own purposes. Therefore, the Lord was not pleased to work a miracle, as though the Lord should say, Now Jacob, you send Esau a present, and I will so soften his heart, and so soften his mind, I will by that means so fully assure Esau that you have no ill-feeling towards him, that his heart shall be melted down, he shall be turned into another man. Why, does not the Lord in dealing with us, use means? The Lord will use means adapted to the circumstances. Suppose I

ask the Lord to show me a favor, suppose I want a favor of a man, and I ask the Lord to show me that favor by that man, I don't go to that man and say, well, I have prayed to the Lord, and he has told me you will do so and so, and you must do so. I should, not think that the spirit of the Gospel. No. I should seek it in that spirit in which it became me to seek it, in the spirit of the gospel; and I'm sure I should be much more likely to succeed in that way than the other. But let us look at the end of the prayer. Jacob, after he had sent the companies on, and the present for Esau, was left alone by the brook Jabbok. And what was he left alone for? Jacob, in the former part of the chapter prayed: and now he waits for the answer. Now Lord, I want the answer. He was not one of your modern professors, that answer their own prayers: no, nor one of your modern prayer-meeting praying men, that pray that the minister may be kept humble; and they take pretty good care he shall be, for they starve him; they take care he shall not get a new suit once in three years scarcely; men that pray the minister shall be kept humble, and they do all they can to keep him so, for they do all they can to annoy him with their gossiping and reviling meetings. And so, they pray, and answer their own prayers. But Jacob did not belong to that school at all; and therefore, having prayed, he knew there was a blessing for those that wait; and so, he did wait. And while he was waiting, there came an angel of God, and wrestled with him. Ah, says duty-faith, he did not wrestle with God, but God wrestled with him to get his hollowness out of him, and did not get it out of him after all. Mercy forgive the thought, but I fear the hollowness was not so much in Jacob, as it is in those who accuse him of hollowness¹. Well don't let us mind what they say, but let us look at

¹ As noted in the previous sermon (number 9) Wells is referring, in part, to Sermon number 239 by Charles Spurgeon which was preached a month prior to this one of James Wells. Here is an extract from Spurgeon's sermon so you the reader can judge this matter yourself. The emphasis is not in the original text. I have added it to aid those searching for the truth.

"Then notice his whole life. While he lived with Laban, what miserable work it was. He had got into the hands of a man of the world; and whenever a covetous Christian gets into such company, a terrible scene ensues! There are the two together, greedy and grasping. If an angel could look down upon them, how would he weep to see the man of God fallen from his high place, and become as bad as the other. Then, the device that Jacob used, when he endeavoured to get his wages was most extraordinary. Why did he not leave it to God, instead of adopting such systems as that? **The whole way through we are ashamed of Jacob; we cannot help it.** And then, there is that grand period in his life, the turning point, when we are told, that "Jacob wrestled with God, and prevailed." We will look at that—I **have carefully studied the subject, and I do not think so much of him as I did.** I thought Jacob wrestled with God, but I find it is the contrary; **he did not wrestle with God; God wrestled with him.** I had always set Jacob up, in my mind, as the very model of a man wrestling in prayer; I do not think so now. He divided his family, and put a person in front to appease Esau. He did not go in front himself, with the holy trust that a patriarch should have felt; guarded with all the omnipotence of heaven, he might boldly have gone to meet his brother, but no! he did not feel certain that the latter would bow at his feet, although the promise said, "The elder shall serve the younger." He did not rest on that promise; it was not big enough for him. **Then he went at night to the brook Jabbok. I do not know what for, unless he went to pray; but I am afraid it was not so.** The text says, "And Jacob was left alone: and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." **There is a great deal of difference between a man wrestling with me, and my wrestling with him. When I strive with anyone, I want to gain something from him, and when a man wrestles with me, he wants to get something out of me. Therefore, I take it, when the man wrestled with Jacob, he wanted to get his cunning and deceit out of him, and prove what a poor sinful creature he was,** but he could not do it. Jacob's craft was so strong, that he could not be overcome; at last, the angel touched his thigh, and showed him his own hollowness. And Jacob turned round and said, "You have taken away my strength, now I will wrestle with you;" and when his thigh was out of joint, when he fully felt his own weakness, then, and not till then, is he brought to say, "I will not let you go, except you bless me." He had had full confidence in his own strength, but God at last humbled him, and when all his boasted power was gone, then it was that Jacob became a prevailing prince. But, even after that, his life is not clear. Then you find him an unbelieving creature; and we have all been as bad. Though we are blaming Jacob, brethren, we blame ourselves. We are hard with him, but we shall be harder with ourselves. Do you not remember the memorable speech of the patriarch, when he said, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and you will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me?" Ah, Jacob, why cannot you believe the promise? All other promises have been fulfilled. But no! he could not think of the promise; he was always wanting to live by sight."

it in a sober light, and according to the word of God². Now the angel wrestled with him. Jacob knew that this was a messenger from God in human form. This angel came and took hold of Jacob.

² I very much like what Wells says here: “according to the word of God” Scripture does indeed shed more light on this. As Matthew Henry, in his commentary shows, Hosea 12:4 is an important passage here. This is not just a matter of what one minister says verses what another teaches. Matthew Henry’s summation of Genesis 32:24-32, given below is full of scripture and to the point (emphasis added). It fully accords with James Wells teaching.

“We have here the remarkable story of Jacob’s wrestling with the angel and prevailing, which is referred to, **Hosea 12:4**. Very early in the morning, a great while before day, Jacob had helped his wives and his children over the river, and he desired to be private, and was left alone, that he might again more fully spread his cares and fears before God in prayer. Note, We ought to continue instant in prayer, always to pray and not to faint: frequency and importunity in prayer prepare us for mercy. While Jacob was earnest in prayer, stirring up himself to take hold on God, an angel takes hold on him. Some think this was a created angel, the angel of his presence (**Isaiah 63:9**), one of those that always behold the face of our Father and attend on the shechinah, or the divine Majesty, which probably Jacob had also in view. Others think it was Michael our prince, the eternal Word, the angel of the covenant, who is indeed the Lord of the angels, who often appeared in a human shape before he assumed the human nature for a perpetuity; whichever it was, we are sure God’s name was in him, **Exodus 23:21**. Observe, I. How Jacob and this angel engaged, v. 24. It was a single combat, hand to hand; they had neither of them any seconds. Jacob was now full of care and fear about the interview he expected, next day, with his brother, and, to aggravate the trial, God himself seemed to come forth against him as an enemy, to oppose his entrance into the land of promise, and to dispute the pass with him, not suffering him to follow his wives and children whom he had sent before. Note, Strong believers must expect divers temptations, and strong ones. **We are told by the prophet (Hosea 12:4) how Jacob wrestled: he wept, and made supplication; prayers and tears were his weapons. It was not only a corporal, but a spiritual, wrestling, by the vigorous acts of faith and holy desire; and thus all the spiritual seed of Jacob, that pray in praying, still wrestle with God.**

II. What was the success of the engagement. 1. Jacob kept his ground; though the struggle continued long, the angel, prevailed not against him (v. 25), that is, this discouragement did not shake his faith, nor silence his prayer. **It was not in his own strength that he wrestled, nor by his own strength that he prevailed, but in and by strength derived from Heaven.** That of Job illustrates this (**Job 23:6**), Will he plead against me with his great power? No (had the angel done so, Jacob had been crushed), but he will put strength in me; and by that strength Jacob had power over the angel, **Hosea 12:4**. Note, We cannot prevail with God but in his own strength. It is his Spirit that intercedes in us, and helps our infirmities, **Romans 8:26**. 2. The angel put out Jacob’s thigh, to show him what he could do, and that it was God he was wrestling with, for no man could disjoin his thigh with a touch. Some think that Jacob felt little or no pain from this hurt; it is probable that he did not, for he did not so much as halt till the struggle was over (v. 31), and, if so, this was an evidence of a divine touch indeed, which wounded and healed at the same time. Jacob prevailed, and yet had his thigh put out. Note, Wrestling believers may obtain glorious victories, and yet come off with broken bones; for when they are weak then are they strong, weak in themselves, but strong in Christ, **2 Corinthians 12:10**. Our honours and comforts in this world have their alloys. 3. The angel, by an admirable condescension, mildly requests Jacob to let him go (v. 26), as God said to Moses (**Exodus 32:10**), Let me alone. Could not a mighty angel get clear of Jacob’s grapples? He could; but **thus he would put an honour on Jacob’s faith and prayer**, and further try his constancy. The king is held in the galleries (**Song of Solomon 7:5**); I held him (says the spouse) and would not let him go, **Song of Solomon 3:4**. The reason the angel gives why he would be gone is because the day breaks, and therefore he would not any longer detain Jacob, who had business to do, a journey to go, a family to look after, which, especially in this critical juncture, called for his attendance. Note, Every thing is beautiful in its season; even the business of religion, and the comforts of communion with God, must sometimes give way to the necessary affairs of this life: God will have mercy, and not sacrifice. 4. Jacob persists in his holy importunity: I will not let you go, except you bless me; whatever becomes of his family and journey, he resolves to make the best he can of this opportunity, and not to lose the advantage of his victory: he does not mean to wrestle all night for nothing, but humbly resolves he will have a blessing, and rather shall all his bones be put out of joint than he will go away without one. The credit of a conquest will do him no good without the comfort of a blessing. In begging this blessing he owns his inferiority, though he seemed to have the upper hand in the struggle; for the less is blessed of the better. Note, Those that would have the blessing of Christ must be in good earnest, and be importunate for it, as those that resolve to have no denial. It is the fervent prayer that is the effectual prayer. 5. The angel puts a perpetual mark of honour upon him, by changing his name (v. 27, 28): “You are a brave combatant” (says the angel), “a man of heroic resolution; what is your name?” “Jacob,” says he, a supplanter; so Jacob signifies: “Well,” says the angel, “be you never so called any more; henceforth you shall be celebrated, not for craft and artful management, but for true valour; you shall be called Israel, a prince with God, a name greater than those of the great men of the earth.” He is a prince indeed that is a prince with God, and those are truly honourable that are mighty in prayer, Israel’s, Israelites indeed. Jacob is here knighted in the field, as it were, and has a title of honour given him by him that is the fountain of honour, which will remain, to his praise, to the end of time. Yet this was not all; having power with God, he shall have power with men too. Having prevailed for a blessing from heaven, he shall, no doubt, prevail for Esau’s favour. Note,

Now, said Jacob, here is something encouraging; and as soon as ever the angel took hold of Jacob, Jacob took hold of the angel; but not before. Just so it is now; when Jesus Christ takes hold of you, you take hold of him; not before. You may depend upon it, Peter's puny arm never in the boisterous sea would have reached the Savior, if the Savior's arm had not first reached him; the Savior's arm first took hold of him. And so, it is, when the Lord takes hold of us by his love, then we can take hold of his love; when the Lord takes hold of us by a promise, then we can take hold of the promise. Is not this as plain as A, B, C? Have you not sometimes known a good sermon pass by you? And why? Because it has not taken hold of you, and therefore, you have not taken hold of it. You have heard someone say that's a good, sober, excellent sermon in itself; but it did not take hold of me; and therefore, I did not take hold of it. Jacob waited for the Lord to take hold of him; and then as soon as ever the angel took hold of him, he took hold of the angel. Well, said the angel, I must go now. But Jacob would not let him go. Then, he wrestled with Jacob to get away from him; that's what the angel wrestled with him for, in appearance, to get away from him. No, said Jacob, it is not very often I get a heavenly messenger, and I don't let him go now till I get something out of him; these angel visits are few and far between, and perhaps I may not have another; and the angel struggled, and Jacob struggled; and the angel said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." Oh, said he, I can't help that; I will keep you here till another daybreak, except you bless me. "And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him." This he did to disentangle himself from Jacob, and to make Jacob feel that all his dependence for protection from Esau must be upon the

Whatever enemies we have, if we can but make God our friend, we are well off; those that by faith have power on earth as they have occasion for. 6. He dismisses him with a blessing, v. 29. Jacob desired to know the angel's name, that he might, according to his capacity, do him honour, **Judges 13:17**. But that request was denied, that he might not be too proud of his conquest, nor think he had the angel at such an advantage as to oblige him to what he pleased. No, "Wherefore do you ask after my name? What good will it do you to know that?" The discovery of that was reserved for his death-bed, upon which he was taught to call him Shiloh. But, instead of telling him his name, he gave him his blessing, which was the thing he wrestled for: He blessed him there, repeated and ratified the blessing formerly given him. Note, Spiritual blessings, which secure our felicity, are better and much more desirable than fine notions which satisfy our curiosity. An interest in the angel's blessing is better than an acquaintance with his name. The tree of life is better than the tree of knowledge. Thus Jacob carried his point; a blessing he wrestled for, and a blessing he had; nor did ever any of his praying seed seek in vain. See how wonderfully God condescends to countenance and crown importunate prayer: those that resolve, though God slay them, yet to trust in him, will, at length, be more than conquerors. 7. Jacob gives a new name to the place; he calls it Peniel, the face of God (v. 30), because there he had seen the appearance of God, and obtained the favour of God. Observe, The name he gives to the place preserves and perpetuates, not the honour of his valour or victory, but only the honour of God's free grace. He does not say, "In this place I wrestled with God, and prevailed;" but, "In this place I saw God face to face, and my life was preserved;" not, "It was my praise that I came off a conqueror, but it was God's mercy that I escaped with my life." Note, It becomes those whom God honours to take shame to themselves, and to admire the condescensions of his grace to them. Thus David did, after God had sent him a gracious message (**2 Samuel 7:18**), Who am I, O Lord God? 8. The memorandum Jacob carried of this in his bones: He halted on his thigh (v. 31); some think he continued to do so to his dying-day; and, if he did, he had no reason to complain, for the honour and comfort he obtained by this struggle were abundantly sufficient to countervail the damage, though he went limping to his grave. He had no reason to look upon it as his reproach thus to bear in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus (**Galatians 6:17**); yet it might serve, like Paul's thorn in the flesh, to keep him from being lifted up with the abundance of the revelations. Notice is taken of the sun's rising upon him when he passed over Peniel; for it is sunrise with that soul that has communion with God. The inspired penman mentions a traditional custom which the seed of Jacob had, in remembrance of this, never to eat of that sinew, or muscle, in any beast, by which the hip-bone is fixed in its cup: thus they preserved the memorial of this story, and gave occasion to their children to enquire concerning it; they also did honour to the memory of Jacob. And this use we may still make of it, to acknowledge the mercy of God, and our obligations to Jesus Christ, that we may now keep up our communion with God, in faith, hope, and love, without peril either of life or limb."

Lord, and not on his own strength; for the angel so lamed Jacob that he could not run away; he was obliged to remain; obliged to leave it to the Lord. Now, that is how I understand the wrestling; "I will not let you go, except you bless me." So, it is, if we are seeking the Lord, when the word comes, and the Lord enables us to lay hold of that word; "I will not let you go except you bless me." Well, did the angel rebuke Jacob, reproach him, say to him, Well Jacob, you really do not know how to appreciate the Lord's mercies; you are such a worthless, ignorant, unbelieving mortal; did the angel say that? No, my hearers; the character given to Jacob by books and printed sermons now days, and the character given to Jacob by the angel, are as opposite as anything well can be. The angel said, "What is your name?" "My name is Jacob." Ah, you've got a better name than that, there's a better name than that for you, though you don't know it, "Your name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince:" What prince? The Prince of Peace, Christ Jesus: "Have you power with God and with men and have prevailed!" Ah, you have got a new name; you are a prince, a prince named after Christ; Christ is the Prince of Life, therefore, Jacob, you shall have peace; Christ is the Prince of Salvation; therefore, Jacob you shall be saved; Christ is the Prince of Glory, therefore, Jacob, you shall be glorified. All this and much more is implied in the answer God gave to his prayer. Why, I am ashamed of the so-called free grace men now days; the carnal Jews showed more respect to the answer God gave to Jacob than these men do now days. The angel touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh; and therefore, the Israelites deemed the sinew of the thigh, even of the sacrificial ox, too holy for common use. "And the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day." The angel having touched it, imparted (they thought) a supernatural holiness to the sinew, even of the sacrificial ox, that it was too holy for them to touch, too holy for them to eat; and, therefore, they have abstained from eating it even unto this day; this may be merely natural, but at the same time, it does show that even natural men recognized in this, something that professed Christians cannot recognize. And was Jacob then so far gone that he could not appreciate the mercies of the Lord? Here is the prayer; here is the answer, "And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel; for I have seen God face to face; and my life is preserved." Now then, take these circumstances, do they not in some measure mark out the path in which we are to walk? Are there not Esau's; that is, are there not circumstances; are there not sometimes persons and things, at which we tremble; and yet perhaps we should be ashamed to confess it before men. Is it not under such circumstances, one of our sweet privileges to pray to our Father in secret; and he who sees in secret will reward us openly? Again, Jacob could not lay hold of the Lord, until the Lord laid hold of him. Is not this our case? But now-a-days, oh dear, dear, dear, people go to the Lord just when they like, lay hold of the promise just when they like, lay hold of Christ just when they like; so that really the religion of the present day is as much under the management of the creature, according to their own confession, as a wooden god was under the management of the carpenter that made it in olden times. A man makes a god, he sets it up, he falls down to it, and his god is entirely under his own management. But you may depend upon it, if your religion be a religion of your getting up, under your management; if your god is such a god as that, that is not the God of heaven and earth, that is not the God of salvation, the God of my text, the God by which the soul can be saved. No: our place is submission, God lives, and reigns, and deals with us *sovereignly*. Thus then, when he withholds the grace of assurance it is that he may increase us in the spirit of prayer; it is that he may lay us so low in the dust of self-abasement as to cause us to seek his mercies, and thereby come more into God's order of things. Thus, then, friends, you must not think that all Christian excellency lies in full assurance of interest, in freedom from trembling, and destitution, and doubting's and fearing's. No; some of the most profitable parts of our experience, and some of the most powerful

means of preserving us in the truth, are those by which our sinfulness is felt, our weakness felt, our poverty felt, our nothingness felt; because it is this that sweeps away every other refuge, and makes us feel that we have no hope but, in the Lord, alone.

I will pass by the interview between Jacob and Esau; but he catches it there finely, I can tell you. Only look at him, they say; he went to Esau, and said, "Your servant" and called Esau, "My Lord." He catches it finely for that. Well, now, I certainly must confess, if I had to meet a lord of the land, and Esau was a great man in point of property, and station, and standing, I should not feel myself, speaking by the common laws and relationships of life, doing wrong at all to address that man by his title, or to speak of myself in the customary way, as his servant. I shouldn't think that had anything to do with my religion. But Jacob is abused for this! Poor dear man: he is not liked, like me, and so they ill use him. However, he shall have one to speak for him while I live; and that will be forever.

But let us go a little farther with Jacob. Jacob comes to Succoth, and he built his tent, which our translation calls a *house*; and I will not detain you upon the disastrous circumstances that took place at Succoth; they were disastrous; and Jacob is thrashed by duty-faith finely, for stopping there; no business to be there at all. But the Scriptures don't say so. "He built an altar there, and called it, God, the God of Israel." Therefore, if he did build a tent there, he took care that his dwelling there should be consecrated by the name of the blessed God; he still abodes by him, did not deny him. And we see Jacob own the Lord in all the successive stages of his life. He said to Laban, "Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac, had been with me, surely you had sent me away now empty." And when Esau saw the women and children, and he said to Jacob, "Who are these?" And Jacob said, "the children which God has graciously given your servant." He would not deny the Lord, no. And so, at Succoth, he did not deny the Lord; he pitched his tent there, dwelling in the promised land. I do not see it was wrong. Oh, say they, if he had not done so, that circumstance would not have occurred. And pray, sir, how many circumstances have occurred in your life which would not have occurred if they had not occurred? Well, say you, that's sensible! Quite as sensible as your remark. For Jacob had no more idea of such a circumstance occurring, than you had of some of the circumstances that have occurred in your history before they occurred. Yes, and sometimes the most disastrous circumstance has occurred by the very means by which we strove to avert it. Don't let us be too forward in that matter, therefore; but let us rather take the circumstance as a manifestation of this truth, that the Lord deals sovereignly with his children. The Lord knew what would take place there, and he could have prevented Jacob stopping there. But God, for designs often deeper than we can fathom, suffers this, that, and the other, to take place, which we sometimes attribute and lay to the fault of the creature, whereas the creature has come to it in the common course of circumstances, unavoidably. These men undertake, then, to send Jacob almost, (though they must not do it quite) to the other place for stopping there. Now, how did the Lord deal with him? Oh, Jacob, what a fool you were, what an infidel you were, what an unbeliever you were; what a besotted, stultified man you were to stop here, Jacob! Not a syllable of the kind. Well, Jacob, you are in trouble. Yes, Lord, I am what shall I do? we are all in danger of our lives together, "Arise, go up to Bethel;" go up there, and look at the pillar; and there stand and meditate upon the promise I made to you more than twenty years ago; there think of the ladder that reached from earth to heaven; and there I will meet you. And he went to Bethel, and built an altar, and the Lord was with him there, and there Jacob dwelt, and dwelt for a long time. So, the Lord dealt kindly with him, notwithstanding the

trouble that overtook him. Oh, the more I contemplate the dealings of the Lord with his people, the more I love the Lord. Instead of upbraiding me for this wrong step and that, which I might have ignorantly or even imprudently taken, he comes and tells me what to do, while others are standing and pointing the finger of scorn, and calling me this and the other, and finding me no remedy at the last. The Lord told Jacob which way to go; he brought him to the most favored spot on earth, where he had in that conspicuous way manifested himself. So, my hearer, your troubles sometimes will bring you back to the first manifestation of the Lord's mercy to you, to the first token of his love. Ah, you say, it has just revived the old promises, it has given a kind of newness to that revelation of him so many years ago. I have gone through many changes since that; but here I am, and these promises are still the same; I am grown a few years older, but these promises are as young and fresh as ever, and therefore, even now I shall live and not die.

Go a little farther. By and by, Jacob has to go down into Egypt; but, before he went, supposing Joseph was dead, and Simeon now a bond-man, and they wanted Benjamin, he said, "All these things are against me." Ah, say these books and printed sermons; "it was his own fault, where was his faith?" Why, you see he could not appreciate the Lord's mercies at all; there is not a redeeming trait in his character. Depend upon it, if these book-makers were placed in the same circumstances, I think their great faith would very soon forsake them; I think their great superiority to Jacob, would soon all be turned into corruption; and to speak plainly to you, and I might as well while I am at it, and I tell you this as in the sight of God, as the Lord my God lives, if I were asked which I would prefer, the weakness of Jacob, or the strength of these men that speak against him, I would rather have his weakness, for their fancied strength puffs them up; Jacob's weakness humbled him down, and made him seek the Lord again. Hear Hezekiah's comment upon this; "By these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit" It was by these means, that the truth in the certainty of it, was called forth again and again; it was by these means, the truth was increasingly dear and precious to him. So if you watch your troubles, you will find that while they sweep away your personal comforts, and, perhaps, in many respects, mortify you before men; yet, when you turn away from all that, and come to Calvary's cross, turn to God's truth, you then look with more love than ever upon God's truth; and you will say, clouds seem to be everywhere else; but when I turn to Calvary's precious cross, here is the Lord Jesus Christ, "The same yesterday, to day, and forever;" and while men are reproaching me, God is honoring me; while men are cursing me, God is blessing me; while men are hating me, God is loving me; while men are lowering me, God is exalting me. But did Jacob's trembling at all these things bring upon him the frown of the Most High? The Lord came in upon the very back of it. Here I am, Lord. Why you are always in trouble, Jacob. Yes, I am, Lord. Well, "fear not to go down into Egypt." Ah, say men, what need for him to give the Lord all this trouble? Joseph was there; what need of the Lord had he there? Now Jacob was delighted with the hope of seeing Joseph; but with all his wealth and rank, Jacob had seen too much of man to put confidence in his own, or anybody else's flesh, and therefore he did fear till he had the Lord on his side. "Fear not to go down into Egypt." Well, Lord, if you are with me, I am ready, I will go directly. No hesitation about it. "Fear not, for I will there make of you a great nation."

But my object is to show that Jacob, as a pattern of the Lord's dealings with his people, was brought into the truth, and kept in the truth. In all the successive stages of his life you never find him out of the truth. Ah, he was very cunning in some things; that we shall hear of next Sunday morning.

But were you never cunning in anything? When the lion's skin is not long enough, do you never look about for a fox's tail to tie on? Ah, you know you do every one of you.

Well, we go to Egypt with Jacob, and we look at him on his death bed; and then look at him in the New Testament. He is in Egypt seventeen years; and Joseph brings his sons to Jacob; and where was Jacob then, as to God's truth? Just notice how nicely he was kept in the truth; there was his preservation; no apostacy, no giving up the truth. Therefore, when Joseph brought his sons to Jacob, he looked upon them, and said, "God, before whom my father's Abraham and Isaac did walk." Well but, Jacob, you are just at the end of your life; you are one hundred and forty-seven years old. That is my feeling still, the same God, before whom my fathers "Abraham and Isaac did walk." It's all very well for you to talk about others, Jacob, but what about yourself? "The God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." Well, friends, what shall we say to this? I love Jacob still; I feel a kindred spirit with him still. And then in the midst of his predictions about others, for the spirit of prophecy rested greatly upon him in his dying hour, in the midst of his predictions concerning others, he contemplates God's eternal mercy; Jacob is himself eternally saved and is just about to possess what God had for him; and he breathes out, "I have waited for your salvation O Lord." That's your contemptible Jacob.

But to conclude, let us come to the New Testament, and we shall (in Matthew 8th) find Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; and what is remarkable too, is that the Centurion, because of the *greatness* of his faith, is likened unto and associated with the Patriarch Jacob; "for many," said the Savior, shall come from the east, and from the west, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God, with Abraham, Isaac, and JACOB." Thus, we have the Gentile Centurion, an example of the faith of the fathers. And as the 8th of Matthew shows Jacob to be in the kingdom of God; so, the 13th of Luke shows him to be associated with all the prophets. Our text shows that he is loved of God, and the 11th chapter of this same Epistle, shows that the Mediator of the new covenant, turned away ungodliness from Jacob. So, Jacob is one of the hundred and forty and four thousand glorified on Mount Zion, and well will it be for those who because they cannot set Jacob up as a model of their fleshly pretensions to creature excellency and so-called Christian piety; because Jacob does not suit these, their hypocritical pretensions, they set to and traduce him, magnify his faults, deny his real excellencies, distort his character, and thus belie the testimony of God. It will, I say, be well for such if they should be found at last where Jacob now is. And if we are standing fast in the truth, as he did through grace stand fast, we shall come to the same end, enjoy the same life, the same light, the same love, the same kingdom, the same God, the same inheritance, the same glory, for ever and ever. Amen.