

I HAVE LOVED JACOB

by

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CHAPTER FIVE

PENIEL— “THOU HAST CONQUERED”

JACOB is now on his way home. He is going back to the poignant but blessed scenes of his childhood days. The old father, Isaac, had passed on; the mother, too, had gone to sleep with her forebears; but still the pull of the native sod was there, and Jacob above all else just wanted to go home.

We read a beautiful statement in Genesis 32:1, “**The angels of God met him.**” What a reception committee! Surely God’s angels did not go out to meet and to escort a liar, a fraud! Yet let us read once more what some of our well-meaning but hot-headed commentators have to say about Jacob on this occasion of his homecoming, and his meeting the Angel of God at Peniel.

Jacob had succeeded in beating all his challengers before, but now he had met his match at last! (*Israel, A Prince of God*, By John R. Stephen, Pages 3 and 4).

What a blind and cruel libel on this grand old Patriarch! We wonder, many times, how such “theologians” will ever dare to meet Jacob face to face in the world to come. Here is another heartless bit of calumny:

“At last the day breaks in the East and God breaks Jacob in his thigh, his self, his crooked nature, and Jacob comes out of the struggle limping, but ever walking straight. It is easy to straighten a sprout but to take the twirl out of a knotted oak is not so easy, God had to break Jacob before he could make him straight” (*A Crooked Man Made Straight*, By W. B. Walker. *The Pentecostal Herald*, July 23, 1930).

What a perversion of the truth which God has given to us! Blind indeed, must be the man who can read the 32nd Chapter of Genesis and get out of it such a bizarre piece of summarizing as we have quoted. Read the record with its full background:

“And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. 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. And he said, let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

“And he said unto him, 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” (Genesis 32:24-28).

All night long the supernatural being wrestled with Jacob, **“until the breaking of the day.”** Then we read, **“When he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh.”** In other words, the Angel of God could not prevail against Jacob on any give-and-take basis of equal prowess. At long last, after a night of struggle, the Angel of God had to resort to his supernatural powers in order to overcome Jacob. Do you call this a victory? Do you call this the breaking of Jacob by God? If it is, then it is certainly the strangest victory that I have ever heard about.

And stranger yet, God Himself does not call it a victory, for it is this very Angel who says to Jacob, **“Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel, and as a prince hast thou power with God and with man, and hast prevailed!”**

In other words, Jacob was the victor, and God has so stated. No longer is he to have the name Jacob, which means heel (*never supplanter*) but from now on his name was to be Israel, **“Thou has prevailed with God.”**

Think of the folly of the claim that in this wrestling bout at Peniel, Jacob went through the experience of conversion. There is not one syllable in the chapter having to do with conversion. The record is clear that the Angel of God **“prevailed not against Jacob.”** How can anyone say that this is Jacob’s conversion? We associate conversion with repentance, the confession of sin to God, the asking of God’s forgiveness, the turning about so that henceforth we should no more seek our own righteousness, but His! Where then is there a single hint of any of these signs which accompany conversion? Why deceive ourselves and read into the text that which is not there?

God’s Faithfulness “I Will Never Leave Thee”

What then is the meaning of the experience at Peniel? Well, look at it again: Jacob is on his way back to the homeland; he knows he is going to meet Esau tomorrow. Esau, the man without a conscience; Esau, the profane person; Esau, who did not hesitate to murder if it were to his advantage; Esau, whom God hated. Perhaps, tomorrow, Jacob would be a victim of Esau’s anger.

So Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed, and it may well be that he spent an evening of heart anguish. This is the Jacob God had blessed through the years gone by.

- This is the Jacob over whom God had watched through all the days of his experiences far from home.
- This is the Jacob to whom God had given a certain outpouring of blessing during his last days with Laban.
- Now, this Jacob had settled down to the gloom of utmost fear and doubt.

Suddenly in the midst of such darkness of soul as Jacob had not known since the night he ran away from home, the Angel of God comes to him and wrestles with him all night. At the break of dawn Jacob emerges as the conqueror. Why? Only for this reason: it was God coming down to meet Jacob in his darkest hour of need, and God was reminding him,

“You, with whom I have been all these years; you, over whom I have watched day and night from the time you left your father’s house; you, who now have conquered the Angel of God: What have you to fear from Esau? I was with you in the land of Laban, I was with you when you left your father’s house, I shall be with you tomorrow when you meet Esau!”

Is this not far more beautiful as showing God’s faithfulness to His covenants, than the sordid picture that some of the Bible teachers try to give us by saying that Jacob had his back broken, his will broken, and his thigh broken?

~ end of chapter 5 ~

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