

WRESTLING WITH GOD

After dividing his company into two camps and then casting himself upon God in prayer, Jacob slept a second night in the camp by the ford of Jabbok. He knew that after he had crossed that river, his brother's army was close at hand.

WRESTLING WITH THE LORD v 24 – on the third morning, Jacob sent his wives and children over the brook Jabbok, along with all their baggage. Jacob though did not cross, and he did not sleep. Alone, he wrestled all the dark night with a man, who was none other than the Son of God (Hosea 12:3-6). Wrestling is a physical competition designed to demonstrate supremacy of strength. Jacob's wrestling reflected his inner turmoil. He had just sent his family and all his belongings that he had laboured so long to secure, over the river. There was nothing between them and Esau's supposed wrath. Jacob had originally taken the blessing from Esau in deceit. Perhaps he feared that Esau would claim it back through war, and the Lord, in judgement on him, would allow it to happen. However, he needed to learn that he could not use his own strength to force spiritual blessing out of God.

SEEKING BLESSING v 25-26 – as the struggle progressed, Jacob's strength became evident. Then, in a moment, everything changed. His antagonist simply touched his thigh, and put his hip out of joint! His strength was gone. Nevertheless, despite the pain, Jacob wrestled on. That was the turning point. That was when Jacob learned to wrestle in God's strength and not his own. His body was broken and in pain, but he did not let go of his hold upon the Son of Man. As the light of day began to cast its beams upon his great struggle, his antagonist asked Jacob to cease his wrestling. Only then did Jacob voice his heartfelt cry for blessing. When life is hard, and we are oppressed in Spirit, soul and body, the Lord may say to us, like He did to His disciples 'will you also go away?'. (John 6:53-67). At that time, the Lord had confronted His disciples with the necessity of His suffering and death, and the need for them also to be willing to lose their lives in loyalty to Him. Some had turned away from the Lord Jesus at that point, but Peter said 'Where would we go? You have the words of eternal life?'. The same was happening to Jacob. The Lord was saying to Jacob, will you let go of me to ease your pain? Jacob refused to relinquish his desire for the blessing of God and as a result, a new day dawned for him.

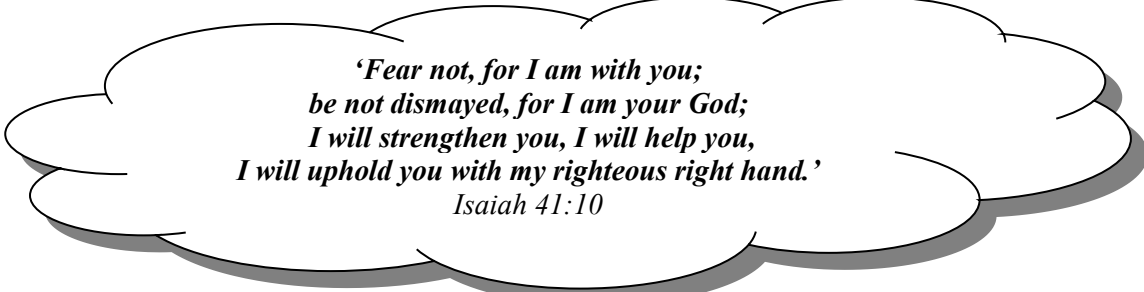
A NEW NAME v 27-29 - in response, the Lord asked his name and Jacob finally confessed it as 'supplanter'. Then the Lord changed his name to 'Israel' meaning 'prince of God'. Jacob's desire for blessing and recognition that it came only from the Lord, had given him power to confess the fallen, sinful effect of his inner fleshly character. In God, he was a prince, with power to prevail. His new name would be given to his descendants, who were to become through God's power and blessing with them, the greatest nation ever to live upon the earth, characterised nonetheless, by spiritual wrestling, pain and persecution.

PENIEL v 30-32 – receiving his new name, Jacob asked the name of his antagonist. However, God did not need to reveal it to Him. Jacob knew already that he had wrestled with the Lord. The name of the angel that had wrestled with him that night would not be revealed until He came as a little defenceless baby to be born of a virgin in Bethlehem (Luke 1:31). The host of angels would be used to announce His birth to humble shepherds (Luke 2:8-12). Without further questioning, Jacob placed another landmark on his journey of faith, naming the spot where he wrestled 'Peniel' or 'face of God'. He had clung to the Lord for blessing, and received God's transforming power that would change his walk on earth forever.

How much do you want the spiritual blessing of God that lasts forever? How much do you think it is worth?

What is entailed in clinging to Christ for blessing? What do we wrestle with? (Ephesians 6:12-18)

When the Lord wrestled with the anticipated agony of the cross, what strengthened Him? (Luke 22:39-46)



***'Fear not, for I am with you;
be not dismayed, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.'***
Isaiah 41:10