

A Night of Wrestling — Determination.

Genesis 32.

Night Scenes of Scripture

Seventeen Bible Night Scenes, illustrating and elucidating various truths of the Gospel.

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Chapter 12

A Night of Wrestling — Determination.

To be alone with God for the first time is the most important moment in the history of any man. Have you ever been alone with God yet? If not, my friend, I hope you will get there tonight. Without any doubt this chapter describes the most momentous hour of Jacob's life — when he was "left alone" with God. That which makes the history of Jacob so very interesting, and in a certain sense so attractive, is this, that there is a great deal of Jacob in all of us; and, knowing that, what a comfort it is to discover that if there be one title of God found more abundantly in Scripture than another, it is this — "The God of Jacob."

In the last book of the Old Testament you find this remarkable expression: "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD; yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau" (Mal. 1: 2, 3). I have no doubt that Esau had a much finer natural character than Jacob, and the wonderful thing is that God loved the man that clearly had not a fine natural character. I say "Thank God" as I see that, for there is hope for me; and you may say from the bottom of your heart, "Thank God, there is hope for me." Yes, my friend, there is hope for you, whoever and whatever you may be.

I do not think many of us would like to have all our history told out in public. Would you? I should not. You would not like to have your life written, except some discriminative and gentle biographer would write to order, just putting in the nice bits — the good qualities, the amiable traits, the benevolent deeds, and the moral virtues that would please your friends, and that would please you, too; and leaving out all the unattractive side of your life. You would not like your whole history written, would you? No, you say, I should not.

Now, God is a great biographer, and with Him is no respect of persons, so He has written the history of Jacob as he was, and although his history was not at all a creditable one as a son, a brother, or a nephew, if we think of man, nor as a saint, if we think of God, yet before the tale ends I find God saying, "Yet I loved Jacob." Thank God for these words, they are a great comfort to my heart.

In the chapter before us you will notice presently that when Jacob gets down on his knees, and turns to the Lord in prayer, he says, "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac." He does not use the expression "My God." He does not like to use it. He feels so ashamed of himself, I think, and yet the title that God uses so plentifully in Scripture is — "The God of Jacob." Read the Psalms, read the Old Testament, and you will be surprised at the number of times it occurs.

Jacob was a man whose heart was in the earth, yet a man on whom God had his eye for blessing. What a wonderful thing that God has his eye upon you for blessing, yet I daresay you have been able to manage like Jacob, and you have hitherto escaped His blessing. But this chapter takes us to the point, where all Jacob's management came to naught — though there never was a finer manager in this scene than Jacob — and when he found himself a poor cripple, helpless, and needing to be sustained, he had his name changed, received the blessing of the Lord, who overcame his opposition, and then he got to know God.

The sovereignty of God, exercised in grace, is a grand thing. I know people object to it. I know sinners kick at it. They think God is very arbitrary. Well, supposing you were let alone to go your own way, friend, and supposing I had gone the whole length of my way, what would the end be? I will tell you. As far as I am concerned — and I may say the same about you — the path would have ended in hell. and eternal judgment would have been our portion. What then has happened? God has come in and arrested us. God has come in, put His hand upon us, and converted many of us. I believe if I were asking every converted man and woman in the hall to lift their arm, as a token that they were saved, I should get a good number lifted up, and if I said, Tell us how it was that you were turned to the Lord? every one here would reply, "It was sovereign grace that laid hold of me. I owe all to the Lord's grace! "

But you might turn to me and say, What about the very scripture you have quoted, "I loved Jacob and I hated Esau" — is not that very arbitrary? No, the ninth of Romans makes this plain. There I read: "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth: it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid" (Rom. 9: 11-14). People often make a great outcry against God about this. But did you ever ponder it, or find out where this statement as to God's love was written? It is found, as we have already seen, in the last book of the Old Testament — Malachi. God does not record these words until thirteen hundred years after the men named had passed out of the scene. The Lord then lets out the secret why He blessed Jacob, and it was because He loved him.

Why then did He hate Esau? If you follow the history of Esau — though he was a nice, natural man — you will find this, that he and his descendants were at heart deeply, and perseveringly opposed to God. I do not doubt that Jacob was opposed to God in the beginning. So was I. So was every believer in this hall tonight. But there came a moment when — God broke him thoroughly down — the night on which he was alone with God. From that time Jacob was a changed man; and though in his life he was not what we could call a bright and shining light as a saint, still he died in faith very triumphantly, and went out of the scene very beautifully.

The inspired record of Jacob's departure runs thus "By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff" (Heb. 11: 21). And why did he lean on the top of his staff? Because he could not hold himself up without support, he had learned to be dependent. He went off the scene worshipping, and his death was bright, if his life was not. We should all take a lesson from this, and seek to live brightly for Christ, and then, should the Lord call us away, we shall pretty surely die brightly. People sometimes say, "How did he die?" But I want to know, "How did he live?"

Jacob's life up to this point in Genesis 32 was a sorrowful one. God had purposed to bless him before he was born, as you read in a previous chapter, where the Lord said unto Rebekah, "Two nations are in thy, womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and *the one* people shall be stronger than *the other* people; and the elder shall serve the younger" (Gen. 25: 23). That is to say, God purposed to bless Jacob beyond Esau. In the end of that chapter, you recollect, Esau sells his birthright for a mess of lentil pottage. Esau was a worldly man, and he sells his birthright — that which belonged to him as the first-born. He comes in faint from the chase, and finds Jacob making pottage. Esau desires it, and Jacob says, "Sell me this day thy birthright"; and Esau replies: "Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do tome? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up and went his way. Thus Esau *despised his birthright*" (Gen. 25: 31-34).

Esau starts his worldly history by flinging lightly back in the face of God that which His goodness had given him. No wonder his end was so bad, or that God calls him a "profane person" (Heb. 12: 16). Do not forget this — that every sinner has, in a certain sense, a birthright. You have been born into a world to which the Saviour has come, and that Saviour came to save sinners, and if you do not receive that Saviour, but hold on in the ways of the world, deluded by Satan, and caring only for the things of this life, you simply follow the footsteps of Esau, and despise your birthright for a mess of pottage — that is, for the things that minister to the body, and give you comfort while you go through this world, from which you will have shortly to pass away. "Thus Esau despised his birthright," is God's comment, and the Holy Ghost bids us in our day beware, "lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright" (Heb. 12: 16). Since that day many a soul has passed into eternity, who has sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. And what is that? A little bit of the world!

I do not admire the way in which Jacob got the birthright; nevertheless he prized what Esau despised. God meant him to have it; but Jacob schemed and bargained for it in an unworthy and unbrotherly way; and next you find in the twenty-seventh chapter that he schemes to get the blessing. God had already purposed that the blessing was to be his; but Jacob was not content to wait upon God for it; so he and his mother planned a scheme to attain it. The twenty-seventh chapter of Genesis presents a very humiliating spectacle, since it shows to what a low ebb of moral degradation even a saint may fall. Isaac loved savoury meat," and bade Esau get him some, adding, that my soul may bless thee before I die." Rebekah prepares some before Esau could return, and then Jacob — the supplanter — for that is the meaning of his name — goes in and takes the venison that has been made ready, and surreptitiously, and with untruth on his lips, gets the blessing. Isaac pronounces over his head the blessing that God had designed for him, but

Jacob did not get it in the right way, and we do well to note what is the result. What follows shows that where there is a wrong action it always brings its own reward even in this world.

Jacob never has earthly happiness from that day forth. He has to leave his home, and becomes a wanderer from that time. He has to fly in order to escape from Esau's fury. He gets alongside of his uncle in a far-off land. His uncle deals hardly with him, and cheats him, as he had cheated everybody else. He is paid back in his own coin absolutely. The next thing is that he has to get away from Laban clandestinely, and then you find that his daughter is ruined, his sons become murderers, his old nurse dies, then Rachel his wife dies, and he comes home to find that his mother is dead. The next thing is, his own sons deceive him, and he has to mourn, for the supposed death of Joseph, for many many years. At length he is obliged by famine to go into Egypt, and there he dies. That is what I call the natural side of the man's history, and a striking illustration it is of the truth of the principle in Scripture, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6: 7).

God gives us the history of Jacob thus fully in order to show how His grace could meet a man of that kind, rise above all his failures, and bless him; and therein, I repeat, is the value of Scripture biography as compared with every other biography. If you take up the biographies of today you find all that is nice, and amiable, and kind about a man related in them. The biographer, however, throws the mantle of charity over those weaknesses, sins, and downfalls of his subject, of which he may be aware, and of course can say nothing of many more of which he is ignorant. What is the result? You have not the real man before you. The consequence of it is that a young person takes up a book of this sort, reads the history say of some good, earnest, devoted Christian man, and then puts it down in despair, saying, "It is no use my trying to be a Christian, for I could not be like that It is very doubtful if I am one at all." Let me cheer you by just saying, That is not the man at all — it is only a bit of him; and what you are finding in yourself was most likely in him, only the uncomely bits of his life have been omitted. Now the Bible gives you the man as he is in absolute fact, and then tells you what God's grace can do for such.

In the thirty-second chapter of Genesis we reach the moment in his history when this planning and scheming man Jacob is on his way back to his father's house. As he goes back, with his wives, and all that he has gathered in the land of Padan-aram, the angels of God meet him. That was a good thing. They meet him, but carry him no message. — He is, I think, uneasy, although he says, "This is God's host." The Lord's eyes are upon him evidently, and he knows it. Whether God will support and sustain him is the question in his mind, for he has to meet Esau. He sends messengers to Esau, who are to say, "My lord Esau; thy *servant* Jacob saith," etc. (vers. 4, 5). What a message to his *brother!* Esau, "my lord"; and Jacob "thy *servant*." Sin always brings its fruit, and wrong its recompense. The man is perfectly conscious of what ill he has done to Esau. He knows that full well, and now his conscience begins to work. It is a fine thing when the conscience begins to work. Friend, has your conscience begun to work before God about the evil of your life? Has your conscience yet got uneasy about your own conduct in the presence of God? Jacob's was evidently very uneasy, for the messengers are told to go to Esau, and say, "Thy *servant* Jacob says" to "my lord Esau." Fancy this to his own brother. But what the English bard says, "Conscience doth make cowards of us all," is perfectly true. Thank God for it. Do not stifle it! Take care that the devil does not scar yours with a hot iron, for we read of some "having a

conscience seared with a hot iron" (1 Tim. 4: 2). What does that mean? That you have resisted the pricks of conscience till it has ceased altogether to act. It is numb — lifeless. You have had a bad history. At first you were perfectly ashamed of it in the presence of God, and in the presence of man; but you got so "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3: 13), and continuance in it, spite of the pricks of conscience that by-and-by — will, lust, and sin having got the upper hand entirely — conscience altogether ceased to act, being by the devil "seared with a hot iron." Awful state! I pity the man that has got his conscience scared with a hot iron.

Jacob's conscience, though dull enough for many a year, had not ceased to act. It is working now, you see, and is not in any sense relieved when the messengers return, saying: "We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him. Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed." If your conscience is working before God, and you are greatly afraid and distressed, all I can say to you is, I am thankful. It is better for a man to be in that state, having his conscience exercised, and in distress about his sins, than to wake up in eternity, and then to find that his whole life has been a huge mistake.

But now when "greatly afraid and distressed," what does Jacob do? Ah! he is Jacob still; trying to make the best of things. So again he makes his plans. To meet a supposedly angry brother coming with four hundred men, eager to avenge their master's wrongs, is a terrible affair for Jacob. What can he do? He divides his company into two, next goes to prayer, and then sends a present to appease Esau. I have to meet him, is his thought, but how shall I do so? First, I think I had better put my party into two companies, so that if he smites the one, then the other will escape. Do you know what really happened when he met his offended brother? "Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him; and they wept" (Gen. 33: 4). Poor silly Jacob, he just illustrates the action of the guilty sinner.

Are you afraid to meet God, and are you trying to "appease him with a present"? What a mistake! "Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him!" just as we read of the father in Luke 15, who, when he saw the returning prodigal "a great way off," "ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." Do you suppose that anything you could bring would affect the feelings of God towards you? Impossible! Understand clearly that nothing you can do — nothing you can bring — no present you may send, will touch the feelings of God towards you, my friend. Do you know what His feeling is towards you? Love! "God is love," and He has proved it in the gift of His Son. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3: 16). Again: "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (1 John 4: 14). Further: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4: 9, 10).

Jacob is "greatly distressed" just because he does not know Esau's feelings toward him, so he makes his plans, and then he says his prayers. Lots of people do the same thing. This scene really brings out our true character. We make our plans, and then go to God to bless them. Sinners do it, and saints do it too, sometimes. Yet you see God had said to Jacob, "I am with thee, and will keep thee" (Gen. 28: 15). Esau would not have been able to touch him, and if his ways had not been deceitful, he would not have been afraid of Esau; but, you see, his conscience

is working. Then, he turns to the Lord in prayer and says: "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy, of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children" (vers. 9-11). Where is faith in this? There is no faith. If he had only had in his soul the sense that God was with him, he could not have prayed thus. There is nothing more blessed for a man than to have in his soul the sense that God is *for* him, and with him. But you see Jacob had not that. He was afraid of his brother, whom he counted his enemy. He was not, though he might have been; it was Jacob's own conscience that suggested that Esau was against him. God was for him, but he had lost the sense of it.

Observe his address to the Lord: "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac." He is not able to say "*my* God." He was not near enough to Him just then, though when he was dying he was near enough to say it. Then he turned and said to Joseph, "Behold, I die: but God shall be with you." He knew, and was at home with Him then. A very different state of soul was Jacob in on his deathbed. Here, however, he is at a distance from God. He has not learned what God is. This night, however, he was to learn God — His power, as well as the goodness of His heart.

His prayer over, he resumes his plans, and sends a present to Esau. He divides the present into five droves, so as to make it look as imposing as possible, and he sends his servants forward. To the foremost he says: "When Esau my brother meeteth thee, and asketh thee, saying, Whose *art* thou? and whither goest thou? and whose *are* these before thee? Then thou shalt say, *They be* thy servant Jacob's; *it is* a present sent unto my lord Esau: and, behold, also he *is* behind us" (vers. 17, 18). And so he commanded the second, and third, and all who followed the droves: and then he said to himself, "I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; *peradventure* he will accept of me."

I believe in these words you have the soul-history of many described, possibly of some in this room tonight. How many labour under the delusion that they have something to do to propitiate God. What a mistake! "I will *appease* him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; *peradventure* he will accept of me." Of course if your present is the ground upon which you are to appear before God, you may well say "*peradventure*." Can you appease Him with a present? Impossible! Yet that is the first thought in the heart of the sinner when he would draw near to God. He wants to appease Him. It is in the heart of a child even. I remember perfectly a lady telling me once of her niece who was disobedient. Her mother bade her go to bed at a certain hour, and left the house. When the hour came, the aunt said, "Now, Mary, go to bed." The child refused. The aunt rejoined: "Then, I must put you to bed. Mother's orders must be obeyed." The child retorted, "If you put me to bed, I will not say my prayers," and kept her word, as to bed she was put and the gas turned out. Very soon conscience began to work in the darkness, which no child of six years of age likes. Her aunt soon heard a pitiful voice calling her. "What is it, my dear?" she asked. "Aunty, if I were to buy that box of sweets I saw yesterday in Ferguson's shop window, and give it to God, do you think He would forgive me?"

I hear you say, "That was a child." But the same thing may come out in your history and mine. Did we not each think — if not say — "I will appease him with the present"? He needs no appeasing, or turning of the heart to us. His feelings toward us were shown in the gift of His Son. "God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him" . . . and "to be a propitiation for our sins." You do not need, in that sense, to appease Him. His heart is towards you. There is nothing in His heart towards you but love. We needed to be reconciled to God; not God to us. He ever was and is *for* us.

I quite admit that, because sin has come in, there must be propitiation. But propitiation is not to turn God's heart towards us. It is required in order to meet the righteous claims of His throne, and that He may be able to let His heart flow out to us in grace, and accept of us in righteousness. The love of God is shown in the gift of His Son, and His righteousness in the death of His Son on the tree. The holy, spotless Son of God — Jesus — who had no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He offered Himself voluntarily on the cross to God, and met the claims of God in respect of sin. In the cross righteousness was demonstrated, holiness maintained, and the character of God vindicated. If God passed over our sin, as lightly as man would pass it over, where would be His holiness? On the other hand, if He judged sin without giving an opportunity of escape, where were His love? The cross of Christ is the divine solution of these problems. I get the love of God displayed in the provision of the Victim, and I get the righteousness of God maintained in the death of that Victim in atonement. On the altar the righteous claims of God are met, and sin is put away. God's holiness is justified, and His righteousness is demonstrated. The blood of the Victim cleanses away the sins of the poor, guilty sinner.

Thus, you have not to appease Him now. But you may turn and say, I have been so long away from Him that I am afraid to come to Him. You need not be afraid of Him. He would fain win your heart's confidence. I know it has been said that Jesus came to do the work by which the Father is now reconciled to us. Such a thought is totally foreign alike to Scripture, and to God's nature. God was never unreconciled. God's heart was ever towards man. Man turned away from God. Man would not trust God. "God is love," and "God is light." And what He is, He has ever been. His character has been shown us in the manifestation of His love, and in the maintenance of His righteousness.

If you were to get forgiveness without the cross of Christ, you would never be really happy. You would not be sure that God might not some day raise the question of righteousness with you. If, on the other hand, you see that God is just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus; if you see that His holy nature has been expressed in the judgment of sin on the tree, when Christ suffered for sins, the just for the unjust; if you see that atonement has been made, and that all God's righteous claims have been met to the uttermost in the atoning death of His blessed Son, then you have a firm basis — an imperishable and unshakable groundwork for the peace of your soul. The atonement alone can be that firm basis; by it you see God saves you, and saves you *righteously*. He saves you in love, but he saves you on the ground of a righteous atonement.

There is a doctrine abroad that God is so good, that He will not judge sin. He loves everybody, and will judge nobody. Lie of hell! judge nobody? Well, if He does not judge anybody, He is not God. He is no better than you and I. If He does not judge sin, He is no better

than the sinner. God must judge sin to the uttermost, and, blessed be His name, He has judged it in the cross of His dear Son, that He may save the sinner who trusts in His Son, who once died on the tree. That is the gospel. He maintains His righteousness, while saving the vilest. Hence the apostle can say, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." And then he says: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth" (Rom. 8: 32, 33). Look! God is on your side. And if God be for us, who can be against us? My friend, if you have thought to appease Him with a present, may your mind be changed tonight. If you have thought, "I will see his face; *peradventure* he will accept of me," listen, and I will tell you what I know. Atonement has been made by Jesus, and accepted by God, and the One who offered the atonement to God has gone up into glory to God, and He has been accepted for me, and I know I am accepted in Him. Jesus did everything, and I get all the benefit and the blessing of His work. Oh, silly soul, to harbour the thought of appeasing God with a present. You need conversion. You need to be reconciled to God. You need to have your thoughts of God changed. You need to be broken down. You need to get alone with God. That is a different thing altogether from appeasing Him.

When Luther went up the five hundred steps at the Vatican on his knees, he was doing what Jacob did here. He was practically saying, "I will appease Him," but when he got half-way up, he was struck by the text, "The just shall live by faith," saw his mistake, and went quickly down. The poor Indian Fakir, with the hook in his back, who is hung up for hours in the eye of the sun, no doubt thinks that he is going to appease God by that. He too is mistaken. When his servants said to Naaman, "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?" — yes, he would surely have done some meritorious act to get his leprosy cleansed — "how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?" (2 Kings 5: 13), it was the same spirit. But you will never appease Him with presents. He does not want to be appeased. All He wants He has found in Christ, and all you need, sinner, you can find in Christ. And if you find Him you need not say, "Peradventure he will accept of me," for "he hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Eph. 1: 6), is the blessing of every believer in Jesus.

The episode of sending the present concluded, Jacob transports his family over the brook Jabbok, and then we read these striking words, "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day" (ver. 24). A remarkable night was this night of wrestling. What do you suppose this was? It has often been thought that this chapter is a picture of what you might call wrestling with God in prayer — an illustration of a kind of earnestness that people ought to have when praying. But look at it. It does not say Jacob wrestled. It says, "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." Do you not see? You can understand the difference between Jacob beginning to wrestle, and this nameless man coming to wrestle with him. Jacob opposed him. You know a wrestler wants to put his opponent on his back, and the better wrestler waits his time and opportunity, and then with a sudden jerk puts his opponent on his back, and then the man is at his mercy. This man wrestles all night unsuccessfully with Jacob, nor gains a point till break of day, so keen is the supplanter's determination to resist. I call this chapter Determination, because Jacob was determined to resist God, and God, so to speak, said to him, "Jacob, I am determined to overcome you." And thank God, He had His way. Picture the scene. Jacob was alone, alone with God, and stoutly opposed to Him. Again I would repeat, Have you ever been left alone with

God? Have you ever spent a night with God? It is a wonderful thing when a man gets alone with God.

A friend was telling me of his conversion a little while ago. How did it happen? He heard the preaching in this hall some months ago, and the Word of God touched him sorely. As he passed out of the door I happened to meet him, and knowing him slightly, I asked him, "Well, are you decided for Christ?" "No," said he, with an emphasis on the word as if to imply *I never will be either*, for he was a man that did not believe the gospel. He had aired his opinions as an atheist for twenty long years, and his answer seemed to say, I will never believe in your Christ. I met him three weeks afterwards. "I hear you are converted," said I "is it true?" "Thank God," he said, "it is true" and the tears trickled down his cheeks. "How did it come about?" I asked. "Well," he said, "it was that night that at the hall door I told you point blank that I was not decided for Christ, and at that time I never meant to be. After I went home I got wretched in the thought that I had refused the Lord." "What did you do?" "I got out of my bed, and got down on my knees alone in the room with God, and there and then I turned to the Lord. Alone in my bedroom I confessed my sins, sought mercy, and found peace with God." "Thank God!" I could only say.

Sinner, were you ever alone with God? I can tell you this, that if you die in your sins you will be alone in hell for eternity. Will there not be plenty of people there? Yes, but they will not be any company for, or comfort to you. You will have the sense of unbroken solitariness. "Jacob was left alone," for blessing this night, and there never was a man converted in this world but was *converted alone*. There were four hundred people in the hall where I was the night I was converted, but *I was alone with God* — altogether alone with God. My life passed in review before me, and I clearly saw the future, but I was oblivious to man, and I heard nothing but the voice of God speaking to me.

When Paul was converted by the light from the glory, what does he say? "They that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me" (Acts 22: 9). He was alone with God. The woman in the fourth chapter of John was alone with Jesus when He saved her. Nicodemus was alone with Jesus when his soul was blessed. Peter was alone morally, when Andrew "brought him to Jesus."

It is the moment of blessing when the soul gets alone with God, and here Jacob was left alone, and God drew near determined to bless him. Have you ever in the history of your soul been thus alone with God? I will tell you what passes. God draws near to bless you. Do not oppose Him. Oh! do not oppose Him. It shall be with you as with Jacob. "And there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." My friend, is God dealing with you? Unsaved soul, is God wrestling with you? Is He putting His hand on you, by sickness, by feeble health, or failing circumstances? There are a hundred ways that God takes to bring a man to Himself. If He is dealing with you, do not refuse, do not resist Him. Your eternal destiny hangs upon your bowing to God. You may resist Him once too often. You may strive against His grace, and the working of His Spirit, one night, one hour too many.

Observe, the man wrestled with Jacob till the breaking of the day. Oh, what mercy on God's part! What patience with the opposer. To break him down was God's purpose. You must

be broken down. You must be reduced. Jacob was in the energy of his own strength opposing the Lord really, and at length when the day broke — it is always the break of day in the history of the soul when God gets His way with us after being alone with God — "when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh" — touched him in the very secret spring of his strength — "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." What is the meaning of that? "Let me go," says the Lord, and what says Jacob? "I cannot let you go now. I cannot sustain myself. I cannot support myself now that my strength is all gone. I am crippled. Lord, I cannot do without Thee." That was the lesson Jacob learned, and a blessed one it was. Have you learned that, my friend?

I have learned that I cannot do without Him down here where I am, and nothing has surprised me more than this, that the Lord cannot do without me where He is. Jesus would not be happy in heaven without me, so fixed is His love on me, and on my side I find that I cannot be happy on earth without Him. That is the reciprocity of affection. God will have you, Christian friend, and me there in glory by-and-by, but meantime we cannot get on without the Lord here.

And now Jacob says, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." "Let me go, for the day breaketh," his victor had said, but Jacob will not release him from his grasp. What was that? True dependence is being wrought in him. He finds his joint is out, and he clings to the One who has crippled him. Friend! cling to the mighty One. Cling to the One who brings you down, and reduces you. It is blessing to cling to Him. It is sorrow to oppose Him. If He says, "Let me go," what will you say? "I will not let thee go except thou bless me."

And now the nameless man says to the helpless cripple, "What is thy name? And he said "Jacob," which means a, supplanter — a sorry name that — supplanter! What is our common name? Sinner! That is my name, in nature. Now hear the gospel of that moment: "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob (supplanter), but Israel (a prince of God); for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." You are a prince, says God to him. You have lost your own strength, and your old name, and now you are clinging to Me, and you are strong.

The change of a name, in Scripture, always teaches this truth, that the person who had his name changed was subservient to the one who changed the name. You find in the Old Testament many illustrations of this. God changed Abram's name to Abraham. Pharaoh changed Joseph's name to Zaphnath-Paaneah. Nebuchadnezzar altered Daniel's to Belteshazzar, etc. Again, when Simon, the fisherman of Bethsaida, was brought to Christ by his brother Andrew, we read, "And when Jesus beheld him he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation a stone" (John 1: 42). This change of name indicated an immense change in Simon's history, for what is a stone? A bit of a rock! And what is the rock? Christ! And what is a Christian? A living stone. He belongs to Christ, and has His life. You belong to Christ, my fellow-believer. You are no longer a poor sinner in your sins, but since you are converted, and quickened by the Spirit of God, you have your name changed. You are a living stone, for you have had to do with the Son of the living God, and by the reception of the word of the Son of God, which has entered into your soul, you have passed from death unto life, and are indissolubly connected with Him.

Here then Jacob is told, 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." He was to have a new name and place before God, who had prevailed against, and broken him down; thereon Jacob had clung to Him, and He had blessed him. Marvellous moment in his history.

My friend, you came into this hall tonight an unsaved sinner, and you may go out of it a saint. Oh, you say, that is a very rapid change. I admit it, but that is what the gospel does. But, you say, I thought the saints were all in heaven. Some of them are. Many are on earth, and you may become one. Do you say, I could not think of taking that place, and calling myself a saint? God calls you one, immediately you take your place as a sinner, own your guilt, and flee to Jesus as a Saviour. He saves you, His blood cleanses you, and God's Spirit seals you, and you become a Christian. Immediately you are such you are the property of the Lord, *separated* to Him, and you are a saint. Do you remember what the Lord said to Ananias of Damascus on the occasion of Saul's conversion? He was to go to him and open his eyes. Ananias replies, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy *saints* at Jerusalem" (Acts 9: 13). This is the first time the word is used in the New Testament; but there it is the people of God on earth who are called saints. Saul had been persecuting them. But Ananias goes to his house, and entering, puts his hands on him and calls him "Brother Saul!"

What a thrill would go through Saul as he heard these words, and what thoughts be suggested to his heart! I think he must have said: "Thank God, I am a brother. I am among the Lord's people. I am among the saints, for he actually calls me Brother Saul!" The epistles of this said Saul — afterwards called Paul — are full of advice to "the saints." What does that mean? People separated to God. Christian, you are one separated to God. You perhaps say, I thought that the saints were persons who ought to walk very holily. I admit that is what we ought to do, but it is not our walk that makes us saints, but being saints we should walk as such. Remember it is the call of God that makes you a saint. So wrote Paul, To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called saints (Rom. 1: 7) - *i.e.*, saints by God's call.

Jacob got a new name. Peter got a new name. And you and I get a new name as soon as we are quickened by the Holy Ghost, and are thenceforth called saints. You may say, Jacob did not walk very differently after this. Not immediately; there was a change further on, when he got a fuller revelation of God to his soul. At this point he says to the Lord: "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" (ver. 29). The Lord does not tell him His name at this point. Do you know why? There was idolatry in Jacob's household. There were idols kept and allowed in the household, and God could not brook that. But further on in Jacob's history the Lord says to him, "Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there" (Gen. 35: 1). Immediately Jacob says to his household, "Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments" (ver. 2). They are put away, and the household turns to the Lord thoroughly. What happens? God confirms Jacob's new name, and reveals His own name to him, for we read: "Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel. And God said unto him, I am God Almighty" (vers. 10, 11). Jacob does not need to turn to God here and ask Him His name. No. "God said unto him, I am God Almighty." He reveals Himself. He, so to speak, says, Jacob, you have got' rid of your idols, now you shall have a revelation of what I am, and I will tell you what I will do for you also. "I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a

nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; and the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land. And God went up from him in the place where he talked with him" (vers. 11-13). Jacob practically and thoroughly removed that which was a hindrance to the revelation of the Lord's name, and as he got this revelation, I think it is very interesting to note, his own new name is confirmed. The same confirmation of the name takes place in Peter's case in Matthew 16. God always confirms what His grace bestows on us.

Name of Jesus! highest name!

Name that earth and heaven adore!

From the heart of God it came,

Leads me to God's heart once more.

Name of Jesus! living tide!

Days of drought for me are past;

How much more than satisfied

Are the thirsty lips at last!

Name of Jesus! dearest name!

Bread of Heaven, and balm of love

Oil of gladness, surest claim

To the treasures stored above.

Jesus gives forgiveness free,

Jesus cleanses all my stains,

Jesus gives His life to me,

Jesus always He remains.