

## Sermon to the Saints which are at Topeka, Kansas -- Sunday, May 23, 2021

The Lord our God sets the bounds of our habitation and as the sole Author of providence, He sets forth for us what matters will be consuming the spirits in this place. It isn't a platitude when I say that I am regularly astonished these days at how from multiple quarters among this body the same spiritual need will be expressed by a trial or a reading or a consuming event. I have been working in the vineyard of Christ's words on Mt. Olivet regarding His own return, and so many glorious lights have been shining for us all in the passages about the fallings away – the betrayal – the temptations and trials and wicked abuse to which the saints in that hour will be exposed. Then, as though awakened from a musing slumber some great question will come forth that needs an answer – and both are appointed by our King.

So today, I am joyfully employed with the examination of a passage that before now has been quite set aside in my heart and mind. Oh, I've thought on it ... I've read the passage many, many times in my life ... I've sung the songs that have sprung forth from the amazing passages by those moved to write them in the past generations. But it has always been just a history to me. Now the Lord has brought it to us at an hour when we all have seen His mighty hand of judgment and instruction to this body of believers. We must examine it and see ourselves in the very fray and learn what is there for us as we walk on in this strait and terrifying wilderness toward the Kingdom of our God.

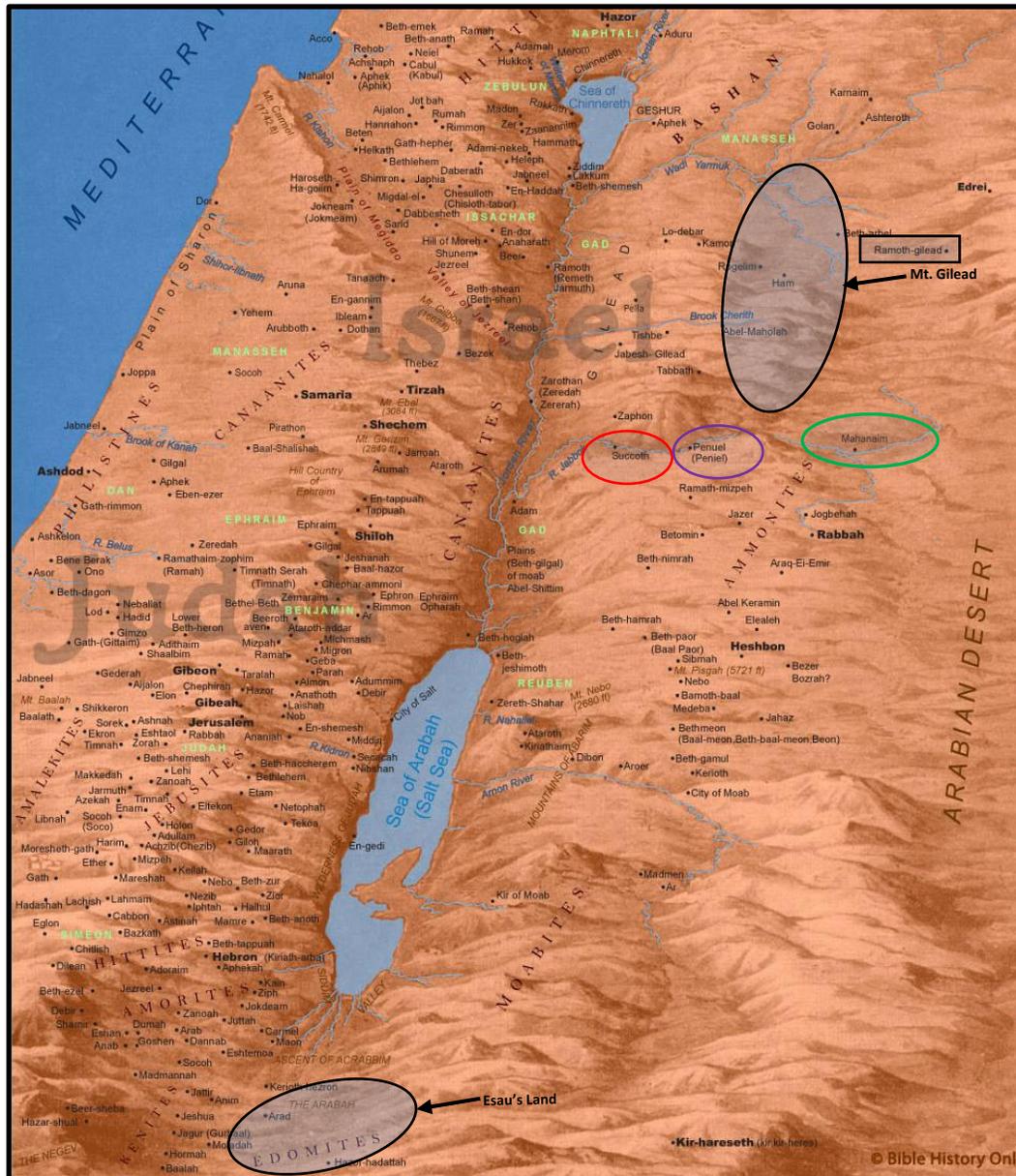
"Israel" – the name that was given to Jacob and the nation of the Jews – means "God prevails". Take that away from this sermon. Israel means "God Prevails"! A lot of time and events and amazing works of God have sprung forth from an event along one of the river Jordan's tributaries – all of which can forever be understood by this ... one ... word. "Israel"! "God prevails"! Thousands of years of human history have passed with treachery and division and strife and grotesque sins and blasphemies and punishments ... and mercies and deliverances and blessings and conquering and promises. All of it to establish a truth in a single name, from a single event that frames the very essence of our faith. "Israel"! "God prevails"!

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The lead-up

The story begins as our fellow laborer and friend Jacob has completed his years at the employ of his Uncle Laban and has been called by the Lord God to return to the land of promise. After 20 years (seven for Leah, seven for Rachel, and six for his cattle), Jacob was dispatched by the LORD, telling him: ***"Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee."*** (Genesis 31:3) Being a rather timid though tricky soul, he slipped off with his family and goods without any formal arrangement with Laban (not knowing that Rachel had snatched onto some of her father's shrine idols). This resulted in Laban and his men chasing them down and having a bit of a row about him leaving. Here we have an interesting analysis, as we consider the travels of this man and his family. We're informed that Laban learned of Jacob's departure on ***"the third day that Jacob was***

*fled [at which time, Laban] took his brethren with him, and pursued after him seven days' journey; and overtook him in the mount Gilead. (Id, vv. 22-23).* The distance between Mt. Gilead and Haran, where Laban dwelled, is estimated at 380 miles. If you consider that Jacob got about a three-day head start, and then was pursued for seven days, then he covered this distance in approximately ten days.



Above is a map that assists us in identifying this pathway and some locations as we consider the lead up to the amazing events we are here today to examine. I'll refer to it as we continue, so you can make some sense of what it tells us. In any event, Jacob and Laban resolved terms of peace at a place named by Jacob "*Galeed*" (Id, v. 48), which historians suggest is the location that later earned

the name of Ramoth-gilead that sits in the foothills of Mt. Gilead. I have placed a rectangle shape around the name on the map above.

***“And early in the morning Laban rose up, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them: and Laban departed, and returned unto his place. ¶ And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God’s host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.” (Genesis 31:55; 32:1-2)***

The language here, about the **“angels of God”** meeting Jacob is worthy of some attention, beyond (I think) what we get from expositors. On the face of this account, there is nothing of moment immediately at issue for Jacob. He has just completed his negotiation with his uncle Laban, and has established that his plan will be to return to Canaan land and raise his family. In other passages, when the eyes of humans are opened to see the armies of angels about them, it is in moments of distress and trial ... when men are at their wit’s end and the God of comfort brings them to an understanding about His presence. Jacob himself, when fleeing from the expressed intent of his brother Esau to take his life, rested upon a stone at Bethel where he was given to see the angels of God ascending and descending in rank (Genesis 28:10-20). Elisha was twice given to see the work of these magnificent creatures in times of distress. First he was given proof of his prophetic ministry upon the taking of Elijah, he was allowed to see the work of these angels in securing Elijah to God (2 Kings 2:12). Second, when the king of Syria sought to take his life and his servant feared of certain destruction. Elisha prayed God to show his servant that **“they that be with us are more than they that be with them” (2 Kings 6:16)**, and he was allowed to see the mountain **“full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha” (v. 17)**. Hundreds of such events involving these ministering spirits exist in the Scriptures; and I submit to my friends here that when they’re allowed to be seen by a human it is in times of great distress or moment. But in this place in this account, the distress is not evident.

Expositors examine the doctrinal truth of how angels are a creation of mighty beings who are appointed to the work of God in the heavens and the earth, and specifically to the work of ministering to His saints. That is an excellent examination, and there have been a number of sermons – partly or wholly – dedicated to this doctrine being laid out to this tender body. I know that I can get lost in the contemplation of this blessing that we have been granted, particularly when my fleshly spirit, body and mind are pained with my weakness. Yet, as I seek to better understand this account of our patriarch Jacob, I think it is insufficient to go only that far in our consideration of the sudden showing of the angels. I think actually it is a component of the unfolding events that enhances our knowledge of God and His wondrous works toward His saints.

Without any context, we are told that Jacob names the location of this vision **“Mahanaim”** (“mah-an-ah’-yim”), which is a Hebrew word that means **“two camps”**. It is a plural version of a word that means **“army camp”** or **“camp of an armed host”**. Expositors offer up a few different thoughts on why this would be the name. Perhaps, they say, it references two teams or battalions of angels that

are assigned to go along with Jacob and his group – one before, one behind ... or one on each side to provide guidance and protection. Another suggestion is that Jacob is referring to two camps – one him and his group and the other the camp of angels. While these options have facial validity, they seem to make it almost pedestrian that Jacob sees these amazing creatures, and has no more profound reaction than to quip a reference to there being two groups?

As a quick aside, you'll notice on the map above that Mahanaim is located slightly south and east of Mt. Gilead, as it feeds into the valley of the River Jabbok. I've placed a green ellipse around the name on the map above, to help with locating this scene. It appears from the passages that Jacob stays in this location for some time. Let's consider the next portion of the account:

***“¶ And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom. And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau; Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now: And I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and menservants, and womenservants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight. And the messengers returned to Jacob, 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: and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands; And said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape.” (Genesis 32:3-8)***

This is the first part of this passage that introduces us to the distress presented for our beloved friend. The passage says Jacob sent messengers to Esau regarding a desire to dwell peaceably with his blood kin while in this earth. Why? Expositors offer that perhaps Jacob needed to pass through territory occupied by Esau to get where he was heading. Another purpose offered is to see what Esau's state of mind toward him might be. But a look at the account makes these suggestions weak.

It is instructive to note that where Jacob ultimately landed and pitched his tents was in ***“Succoth” (Genesis 33:17)***. Succoth, as you can see on the map above, was just to the west of Mahanaim and south of the River Jabbok. Whereas ***“the land of Seir, the country of Edom”*** can also be seen on the map all the way to the southern tip of the Canaanite territory. Esau conquered that land from the Horites who had it before him, and in doing so named it after himself – using the name he obtained from selling his birthright to Jacob for a mess of red pottage. Where would one find any need for a natural crossing of those paths?

As for the notion that he would be generally concerned for knowing Esau's state of mind toward him, there had passed more than 20 years since Esau had expressed a desire to kill his brother (Genesis 27:41). If there was properly a fear of Esau's revenge expressed so many years prior, why is there no hint of it during that long time while Jacob dwelt in the Syrian/Chaldean territory for two decades? So what brought that 20-year-old threat back into focus? There simply seems to be a

critical piece of this historical puzzle missing in how expositors have considered the words of the text.

But if we take a more substantial look at the name Jacob gave to the place where the angels of God met him, we might find the piece of this account that makes the whole of it take shape. If **“Mahanaim”** is to record that the angels were sent to warn Jacob of what was prepared for him – and that he would be put into such fear from what was coming as to break his camp into two camps to in strategic hope that Esau would not stamp him (and therefore the promise of God) out of the earth – then we better understand both *why* the angels came to him and *why* he memorialized it in the base from where his forward movements would have to be planned. This would help us to know that Jacob was sent into a great and terrifying distress. He was told that he would face an existential threat to himself and his posterity ... and that from those ministering spirits who are often sent to tell the saints that they will be so grievously tested in battle; whether physical or spiritual.

So Jacob begins his strategy. His first plan is to test the nature of the threat. Will peace be possible, or is he going to have an all-out war that could cost him his life and the life of his two wives, two concubines, and 11 children? He sends an ambassadorship south to Mt. Seir, where his brother rules. They have instructions to sue for peace ... **“I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight.”** The response he gets tells him he will not be let out of these bonds that the Lord has placed him in. He will not have the crooked path made straight.

So Jacob begins to set up his Mahanaim ... his two camps ... his **“two bands”** of people and flocks and herds and camels. He moves to strategy. He moves to a passionate thrust to reckon a solution to the mess into which he has been plunged by God’s providence. Just as he’s been given endless blessing and what appears to be an open road to the promised land ... having rid himself of the shackles of Laban and his ten-fold changing of his wages ... he lands in a deathtrap. It does not say in this passage that he moved those two camps. Only that he prepared them to move out in two different pathways when it is time.

Then he prays:

**“¶ And Jacob said, 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 shewed 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. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.”**

**(Genesis 32:9-12)**

It is a good thing for us to do. Regularly. Emphatically. Rightly. But it is not a truth that our prayers will be immediately answered – at least as we might measure time. In this instance, Jacob is not relieved or resolved. He still thrashes about in his “I’ll fix this with good strategy” mode. Jacob is a tricky man ... using deceit to take his brother’s birthright, then to take his brother’s blessing, then to paint the stripes on the bottom of the feeding troughs because he thinks that will actually make the cattle have stripes! Trickery. Strategy. He’s going to out-think God’s providence and save himself!

***“¶ And he lodged [at Mahanaim] that same night; and took of that which came to his hand a present for Esau his brother; Two hundred she goats, and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes, and twenty rams, Thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, twenty she asses, and ten foals. And he delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by themselves; and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space betwixt drove and drove. And he commanded the foremost, saying, 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. And so commanded he the second, and the third, and all that followed the droves, saying, On this manner shall ye speak unto Esau, when ye find him. And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me. So went the present over before him: and himself lodged that night in the company.” (Genesis 32:13-21)***

Target softening. Wave after wave after wave of presents. If they are going to be lost to Esau’s rage, they will be lost when he catches them, so losing them in this strategy would be no different. Humans can be swayed, Jacob believes. The hardened heart of the enemies of God’s people can be softened by our words and behavior, as ***“a soft answer turneth away wrath” (Proverbs 15:1)***. Christ Himself articulated the wisdom of the action:

***“What king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.” (Luke 14:31-32)***

What king indeed? Christ tells us to ***“agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him” (Matthew 5:25)*** if we desire not to be cast into prison. So we cannot quarrel with the value of the strategy Jacob employs. The question that I am convinced is raised for our hearts in this terrifying event is whether we should ever think to do so with any expectation of success unless the Lord makes it to prosper? In this instance, Jacob is drawn into the deepest of distresses over what is unfolding before him. We have such distresses. I submit to this little group of souls that you will absolutely face them in your life, if you are one of God’s little lambs.

So, after he sends his waves of peace offerings over the River Jabbok, he remained with the company of cattle and people – including his two wives, his two concubines, and the 11 children they four

gave him. This account had to be told here today, as the situation had to play out for our beloved friend Jacob, so that we would come to this moment of deep spiritual conflict and contest. I've laid it all out for you, so I could now address the trauma and blessing that follows.

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The dust-up at Penuel.

***“And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two womenservants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok. And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had. ¶ 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. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh. Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob’s thigh in the sinew that shrank.” (Genesis 32:22-32)***

The wives and children and all those who were left with him are sent over the brook, a ford of the River Jabbok. They have received their directives, their assignments. It is night now, and Jacob has done his hedging. He has carefully weighed the risks and employed his strategies. Here you find Jacob’s faithless Jewish posterity spin out tales and traditions to prop this human being up for worship as a profound strategist who parses out the wisdom of the ancients and brought them to bear to save himself ... to save his family ... to anchor with human ingenuity the promises of God that a people would come from his loins, as Paul warns the Galatians:

***“Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” (Galatians 3:3)***

The carnal man cannot grasp these things. The carnal man cannot see beyond the shuffling about of created things while imagining his superiority over them and his inherent righteousness that at least equals that of his Creator. Fearfully, God’s elect saints are also conceived in this wicked pride. We also run to such machinations almost as fast as we take the first breath after having great afflictions land upon us. When we’re in carnal darkness, we connive ... we cajole ... we strategize ... we hedge our bets. We place one foot over in the camp of self-will just enough to have a back-up plan in case our God is proven insufficient! How revolting!

So there our spiritual father Jacob sits on the north side of the river Jabbok. It's still in the early hours of the morning and all of his stratagems have been deployed. It is yet dark ... before sunrise ... alone with his thoughts and fears and terrors and guilts and all such internal cogitations. A man appears on the scene. No description in this text that it is an angel, but we know from the prophet Hosea that the contender here is none other than the Son of God in the form of a created angel.

***“[Jacob] took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God: Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him:”***  
**(Hosea 12:3-4)**

The weight of the distresses Jacob has endured ... the continuation of them, despite his suing for peace with his brother ... the notion that God's promise – that through him would a nation rise so large that it cannot be numbered – is presently at risk of complete collapse. The accumulation of fear and distress and fatigue and spiritual exhaustion. It boils over into physical and spiritual confrontation with Christ, presented in the form of an angel or (as the text articulates) ***“man”***.

The word ***“wrestled”*** literally means *“to wrestle, grapple (get dusty), bedust”*. There is no gentrifying this event. It was evidently a physical confrontation. This man, Jacob, about whom it is said ***“he took his brother by the heel in the womb”*** (Hosea 12:3) seems a pugilistic fellow. Ready to fight ... ready to have a go in the name of his cause. In this instance, his cause seems to him both personally and nationally a righteous one. He understands the promise given his father Abraham ... his father Isaac ... and to him, that a nation would come from him and that all nations would be blessed from Him who comes from Jacob's seed, even Jesus the Christ. He understands that his present circumstances exceed the mere discomfort – even temporal death – of human beings, though such a thought would terrify the most robust of men. This is an eternal struggle about the foundation promises of God as this elect soul was given to see them.

So these two grapple in the valley of Gilead, along the banks of the Jabbok. We're now west of Mahanaim, and still on the north bank. You can see on the map above with a purple ellipse around the place identified in the text as both Peniel and Penuel, named by Jacob saying ***“I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved”***. We know there was intense physical grappling, and we know there was spiritual grappling. As the day approached, the angel bid Jacob to let Him go but he would not ... unless he was blessed. The angel of the Lord touched the sinew in the hollow of Jacob's thigh – breaking his very body and causing him to limp for the remainder of his days – yet he would not let him go until he received the blessing! Jacob ***“wept, and made supplication unto him”*** until he ***“had power over the angel, and prevailed”***. Here we have the core of this event. Here we have the doctrinal matter that needs an understanding. Are we to draw from this, as Jews and all self-righteous souls have, that man's desire will prevail over that of the King of Glory? Are we to conclude that Jacob's free will compelled the angel of God to administer a blessing upon him ... like his deceit and manipulation resulted in his father Isaac granting him the blessing traditionally owed

the older brother? Is this monumental event in the history of God's book supposed to teach us that in extreme instances perhaps man can overcome God? If man wants an outcome with enough passion and energy and wrath and weeping and physical demand ... that God will relent to the righteousness of man's cause?

What we have at issue in this passage is the perseverance of the saints. Instructively, the word in this passage when it is said ***"as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and has prevailed"*** – for which Jacob's name was changed to ***"Israel"*** – is the commonly used name ***"Sarah"***. It means ***"to persevere, contend with"***. It is the expression of that spiritual energy infused into the saints to allow them to wrestle with the angel of God through all of their deep trials and temptations and fears and assaults – and prevail. It is important to understand this in proper light of the Scriptures, lest we presume upon His will and Word and find ourselves in the darkness of free will.

We have a similar passage in this sure word of prophecy, from which we may see both the righteous soul put to his extreme as well as the work of God Almighty in infusing that beset soul with His own strength to overcome the burden and show himself ***"more than conqueror[] through him that loved [him]" (Romans 8:37)***. Job, who was bereaved of his ten children, stripped of all his wealth and power in a single stroke, and then imprisoned in a body wracked with boils from head to toe that burned incessantly, disputed with his friends about what lesson is to be taken from His tender Creator from the present distress. We find him declaring:

***"Will he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me. There the righteous might dispute with him; so should I be delivered for ever from my judge."*** (Job 23:6-7)

After a copious examination of the endless and perfect power and prerogative in God to make use of His creation as He sees fit, expositor Joseph Caryl turns to an exhaustive examination of this curious language ***"he would put strength in me"*** in the context of the ***"dispute"*** between the righteous soul and the Judge of all the earth. Here we perhaps gain some better glimpse of what is at work between the angel of God and our friend Jacob.

Caryl: *"he will be so farre from putting out his strength against me, that he will put his strength into me, he knoweth my weakness, how unable I am to contend with or bear up against his power, and therefore he would put power into me. Mr. Broughton renders clearely to this sense, would he by his great power plead against me, no, but he would helpe me; helpe is power, and he that helpeth another, administers power to him; he either puts new strength into him, or joynes his strength with him. So then, Job was assured that God would put strength into him, or be his strength, to helpe and carry him through all the difficulties that lay before him.*

...

*God himself puts strength into humbled sinners, that they may stand before him, as he knows what strength such need, so he gives them the strength they need; He will put strength in me, may be the*

*confidence of any soule in Job's case. We are not able to stand before God under the burden of our corruptions, nor yet are we able to walke before him under the burden of our duties, unlesse himself be pleased to administer strength to us."*

This supernatural strength is our only hope against the extraordinary afflictions appointed to instruct the righteous soul in patience and faith. The Apostle Paul articulates it in a conclusive manner that seems at times so elliptical that the force of the passage easily eludes the sensitive sinner who feels both the weight of his own worthlessness and weakness and the severity of the burden:

***"Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)***

That is, ***"then am I strong"*** because, as articulated in the verse immediately preceding ***"the power of Christ may rest upon me"***. The infirmities .. the reproaches .. the necessities ... the persecutions ... the distresses that are poured out upon us so that, as Job articulates, at times our ***"soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life" (Job 7:15)*** are incapable of being sustained, unless we receive from our gentle Savior a provision of His power and His endless strength to rise up in defense of the righteousness gifted us in the Covenant of Grace and prevail over our Lord in the matter.

Two weeks ago, Ben presented a sermon on John 14, in which he discussed Christ's words: ***"He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do" (John 14:12)***. In his analysis, we see how great those works are because of where they derive. ***"I believe that the smallest and most relatively insignificant work that is wrought in us by the Holy Spirit in this age falls into this category. 'LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us.' (Isaiah 26:12)"*** As Job faced the complete ruin of his life, and therefore to him the failure of the promises from God to keep him in righteousness and peace, so too our patriarch Jacob ... and so certainly ourselves. When the wrestling was over, though, the name given to Jacob expresses the source of the strength. It was not attributed to the man, though the man – and the nation – bears the indelible mark that brands all of God's elect in the spiritual realm: Israel! God prevails!

I believe it is the lot of the righteous to be put into deep trial, though the promise is ***"a bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench."*** (Isaiah 42:3). The process is brutally terrifying. The fight is life-altering and body breaking. We do not get to paste a smile of plastic assurance onto our faces and pretend that we walk in God's blessings because we're unruffled and unharmed. Rather, we are taken to ***"sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: .. into deep waters where the floods overflow" (Psalms 69:2)***. There we must do battle on the question of our faith. There we wrestle with the angel of God, seeking that He will give us evidence that we are His

under the Covenant of Grace ... that the blessings granted there will be ours and we ***“may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.”*** (1 John 4:17)

Of course, once we are given that blessing ... once we ***“have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy”*** (James 5:11) ... the joyous communion with Christ returns and though we will likely go halting for our days from the physical assault on our persons, we will see how God’s providence and promises are perfect and He is our Deliverer. We are given ***“power over the angel, and prevail [and] weep, and [make] supplication unto him”*** and we ***“see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living”*** (Psalms 27:13).

So in deep distresses, when we finish our thoughts and our excuses and our justifications and all of those things that the weak human heart and body cast up like thick dust in the scuffle of our spirits with God ... think upon this great wrestling between Jacob and the angel of the Lord, and bring that rebellious spirit down to the place where it always begins and ends: “Israel”! “God Prevails”!

I love you all. Amen.