

Peniel

by Henry Law

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith and prayer in achieving spiritual greatness and overcoming difficulties.

Scripture: Genesis 32:30, Psalm 139:7, Isaiah 27:5, Isaiah 62:7, Isaiah 64:7, Hosea 12:4, Matthew 7:7, Hebrews 4:16, James 4:2, 1 John 5:14

Topics: "Faith And Prayer", "Gods Presence"

Description

Henry Law preaches on the story of Jacob at Peniel, emphasizing the importance of faith and prayer in experiencing God's presence and receiving His blessings. Jacob's unwavering faith and persistent prayer led to a life-changing encounter with God, where he wrestled with the Divine and received a new name, Israel, signifying his victory and princely power with God and men. Law encourages believers to seek their own Peniel moments, where they can see God face to face, have their lives preserved, and experience His presence in every aspect of their lives.

Transcript

"So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: 'For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.'" (Gen 32:30)

The happiest heart in the world is that in which faith and prayer have undisturbed rule. The truth of this statement follows from the fact that faith has the key of heaven; and prayer has the ear of God. And who is as happy as the man who is always free to enter within the veil and hold communion there? Beseech the Spirit to fan these graces into a bright flame. With this desire let us hasten to Peniel and tarry there until a holy fire is kindled!

Jacob's hard servitude is ended. Home, with its fond endearments, is again before him, but, when he reaches the borders of his native land, he finds it garrisoned with perils. Esau, terrible in fury, mighty in force, is armed to intercept, and to destroy. The wanderer who fled from death, returns to die. But many terrors quench not faith. Jacob, urged by its impulse, flies directly to the mercy-seat. He humbles himself, as unworthy of grace's least crumb. Thus faith strips itself of all, that all the glory may be God's. He pleads that he is in obedience's path. Faith has no other ground on which to stand. He meekly claims the promises; for gracious promises are the title-deeds of hope. But faith, busy in heaven, is not idle upon earth. In thoughtfulness and diligence it sows the seed, from which successes spring. With upward eye it labors and prevails; while unbelief looks inward-downward and so fails.

The plans of Jacob are all wisely formed. Then darkness mantles the earth, but it brings no pillow for his head. It stands, and stands alone, on Jabbok's banks. We here see again, how grace gains oil for his lamp. Reader, be sure of this; he is not a thriving and a well-stored saint, who is not much in solitary communion with God. No public ordinances, no social worship, no Christian fellowship, no mutual interchange of godly thought, can be a substitute for the solitude of the prayer closet. It is when all things are banished, that the smiles of Jesus are most sweet, His voice most clear, His comforts most supporting; then the Word reveals its treasures, and the promises teem with life. Many mourn lifelessness of spirit, and fruitlessness in work. The withering cause may be, that busy haunts are too busily frequented, and the quiet chamber is too rarely sought. But is the lonely Jacob alone long? Oh no, a stranger suddenly draws near, and grapples with him, and strives with mighty energy to stay his progress, and to lay him in the dust. But who thus wrestles in the solemn stillness of this solemn night? The form is human, but the person is Divine. But what is the cause of this wrestling? Every act of Jesus is a volume written within and without in golden letters of instruction. Thus Jacob, and every successive pilgrim, learns, that the land of promise is only gained by battling through opposing hosts. Reader, if you know little of spiritual conflict, it may be you know nothing of the camp of Christ. Examine yourself. Are you truly in the faith? If so, at the cross you have drawn a sword, which never finds a scabbard upon earth, and rarely finds a respite of repose. They, who win the crown, fight a good fight. "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." But perhaps the struggle, though severe, was short? Not so. It lasted until "the breaking of the day." Earth is a vale of darkness and of gloom. But yet a little while the shadows will flee away. The brightness of a cloudless eternity will dawn. The weary pilgrim will enter the city which has "no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Then, in a perfect place, there will be perfect rest. Next the prowess of Jacob claims our wonder. Though nothing but a feeble worm, he is not crushed. He awakens again and again his energies. He exerts again and again every vigor of every nerve. He is but flesh and blood, as we are, yet he cannot be subdued.

It is very important, that we rightly see what was the grand mainspring of Jacob's indomitable heroism. It cannot be too plainly urged, that it was faith. He followed the Lord fully. He knew that the voice, which called him, was victory. Hence he was confident, that it were easier to scale and storm the heavens, than to frustrate his assured success. Faith is a rock, when thus on the Rock of promise. It is not of earth, therefore it is imperishable. It is of heaven, therefore its energies are Divine. It looks to Jesus, therefore it overlooks all difficulties. It leans on Jesus, therefore it is as firm as God. But Jacob wrestled not in faith only, but in supplication and in tears. "Yes he struggled with the Angel and prevailed, he wept and sought favor from Him." (Hos. 12:4). We learn, that faith is always in earnest, therefore it prays. It is always humble, therefore it weeps. Here, again, a door is opened in heaven; and we see Jehovah vanquished by a praying saint. True prayer is indeed bold. It draws near to God, and wrestles with Him, and gives Him no rest, until an approving smile testifies that the appeal is granted. God neither can, nor will, release Himself from the intensity of prayerful efforts. He cannot, because the truth is set up in heaven, that prayer shall prosper. He will not, because prayer is the moving of His Spirit in the heart, and the speaking of His Spirit on the lips. To deny prayer would be to deny Himself. To be silent to it would be to be silent unto Himself. "If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us: and if we know that He hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him."

Oh my soul, examine well the Scripture's picture of prayer. It is "to take hold" of Him, (Isa. 64:7). It is "taking hold of His strength," (Isa. 27:5). It is to "give Him no rest," (Isa. 62:7). Learn these truths in their power. Use them as the habit of your life. Then you will know prosperity and peace of soul. But the heart

strong in faith and prayer loses all nature's hardness. It becomes soft, as the sympathy of Jesus: and tender, as the whispers of His grace. Thus Jacob's streaming eye proclaimed with what subdued sincerity he loved the Lord, whom he so tightly grasped, and how deeply he was melted by inward consciousness of sin's demerit. Reader, remember, except you have faith, and prayer, and brokenness of heart, you have no signs of life. Prove, then, yourself at Peniel. Never quit, until you hear these words, "Great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt." And again, "Behold he prayeth." And again, "She hath washed My feet with tears; therefore, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much."

But we are so framed, that spiritual greatness may be a snare. It may lead to boasting, which is destructive victory, which leaves the victor in the chains of pride. Our guardian Lord knew this, and since it is better to prevent than to heal, He "touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh, and it was out of joint." Here we have a mirror, which reflects many of the Lord's dealings with His favored children. In prevailing they are crippled, lest by prevailing they should perish. Strong grace is checked by enfeebled flesh, lest it should climb the dizzy heights of self-esteem. Many halting infirmities convince them that a yielding Lord has power to lay low. They learn that victory is His gift, and not the wages of their might. They feel that they are broken reeds, except God works with them to will and to do. Let us behold once more the triumphs of persevering faith. The angel concedes the victory, and asks to be released from the unyielding arms. Jacob, with limb disjointed, but with faith confirmed, seeks no advantage but an increase of heavenly favor. With holy boldness he exclaims, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me." He cares not for healing of body, or for outward prosperity, he only asks for increased tokens of God's love, and for increased health within. "Bless me," is his prayer. Such noble yearnings are the Lord's delight. He honors them, because they honor Him, He crowns them with all that God Himself can give.

Count, if you can, the spoil which Jacob won, when the Lord blessed him there! And the Lord gave him a new name which give perpetual fame to this exploit. [His name was changed from Jacob to Israel]. Heroic deeds have endless life. Wherever the Word of God is preached or read, Israel is a title, which tells of Jacob's princely power with God and men. The record is true. As a prince, he constrained God to bless him. As a prince, he drew the heart of Esau like a captive into his arms. Reader, be an Israelite indeed, and heaven is yours, and earth is yours. Heaven is yours to bless you. Earth is yours to serve you. Jacob receives a name, and gives a name. He calls the place Peniel, "for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." Again I say, be an Israelite indeed, and every place will be your Peniel. In every scene you will behold God near. Through life, in death, you will have an eye to gaze undazzled on Him. Your secret chamber will be Peniel - as you kneel, God will come down, and show His smiling face. The family sanctuary will be Peniel - you will see Him extending the wings of mercy over you and yours. Every page of the Bible will be Peniel - bright with the radiance of Him, who is "the Light of Life," and "the Sun of Righteousness." Your post of daily toil will be Peniel - for you will set the Lord always before you. His earthly temples will be Peniel - in the prayers and praises of the assembled worshippers, in the proclamations of His truth, He will manifest Himself unto you, as He does not unto the world. Your dying bed will still be Peniel. Jesus will come again, to bear you safely to the Father's home. Eternity will be glorious!

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