

PENIEL—GEN. xxxii. 24—32.

No. II.

THE BLESSING.

The victory was won, yet the Angel did not at once bless the patriarch. "He said unto him, what is thy name?" This question was humbling, and seems designed to bring his sin to remembrance. "And he said, Jacob"—the supplanter. Here we are brought back to the position in which Jacob stood. His past sin must have come back retributively upon his conscience. His very name is suggestive of that act for which he had fled from Esau, and which now made him tremble at the prospect of a meeting with his brother. He had doubtless during the twenty years sincerely repented of his sin. He had received assurance of the Divine forgiveness. It seems strange, therefore, that he should be reminded of it at the very moment of his illustrious victory. Yet all this is only to mark more signally the grace of God. Now, he is to receive a new name; a name to be had in everlasting remembrance; a name which was to be borne not only by the nation of which he was the illustrious father, but by the whole elect church of the living God, gathered out of all the tribes of earth, through all succeeding ages. "And he said thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with man and hast prevailed." True, God had given him that power, but it was none the less true that he had prevailed, because the power by which he had held fast was the gift of God. Here we see why the covenant Angel wrestled with Jacob. It was not to cast him down and take away the little strength he had. It was to establish and strengthen him, to draw forth and increase his power. Painful as the experience was through which he had passed, it was all ordered in love, and the consequences thereof were eminently gracious. So is it ever with the Christian. He may for a time be brought into a horror of great darkness; there may be a struggle in the very depths of his being like the passing through the valley of the shadow of death; he may be distracted and full of fear; in the presence of the Holy One, he may feel his very soul shrink and shrivel up—yet through grace is he enabled to keep fast hold of the Angel of the Covenant; and in every conflict is his faith strengthened and his earnestness deepened, until by faith and prayer he prevail at length. Then a glad deliverance comes, the clouds are rolled from his heart and from his destiny, and he walks again in the undimmed and glorious light of God's countenance.

With men too Israel had prevailed. In prevailing with God, he had necessarily and certainly prevailed with men; the one was the pledge of the other. Either the meeting with Esau would be averted; or the anger of Esau turned away, and the dreaded interview prove one of peace and love; or at the very worst Israel would meet him in that strength that always gives victory. He has only now to stand still and see the salvation of God. We see at once that Israel no longer fears to meet Esau. Personal danger is no longer his absorbing thought. He continues his petition, but there is no trace in it of any anxiety as to how he shall get through the morrow. He knows well that a brother offended is harder to win than a fenced city. But he has the assurance that Esau is already won, for God has undertaken for him. Hence in that most solemn moment of his existence, his prayer is, "Tell me, I pray thee thy name." He would know more of that being who had wrestled with him till the dawn of day, and from whom he is now about to part. But the answer is, "Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name?" This does not seem to us, as though the Angel would hide himself from Israel, and shroud his character in mystery. But rather it seems spoken in the way of gentle rebuke; as though he said, 'Thou hast felt my pre-