

I. JACOB'S PRAYER. 9. See God's promises to such as Jacob. Ps. 50: 15. **God of my father**—This was the title by which God made himself known to Jacob at Bethel, ch. 28: 13. **Which said unto me**—see ch. 31: 3, 13. (Notice the reference in v. 13). This is the first recorded example of prayer in the Bible, note its structure. Appeal to God as standing in a covenant relationship; the present situation of danger comes in the path of obedience to his command; confession of unworthiness and thanksgiving for past mercies; direct and simple petition for just what he wanted, and this based upon the divine promises. 10. **I am not worthy of**—lit. "I am less than all." These are the best prepared for the greatest mercies that see themselves unworthy of the least (Matthew Henry). God's mercy and truth are linked together, Gen. 24: 27; Ps. 25: 10; 57: 3; 61: 7; 85: 10; 89: 14, and many other passages. His gracious promises cannot fail. **With my staff**—Jacob proved the truth of Job 8: 6, 7, and could say Ps. 18: 35. The extent of Jacob's wealth may be surmised from the fact that his present to Esau consisted of 580 different animals. 11. Compare the similar prayer of David Ps. 59: 1, 2. Jacob felt the truth of Pro. 18: 19. **The mother with**—lit. "upon." "The mother upon the children," stands in apposition with "me," there is no conjunction "and" in the original. "I am as a mother bending over to protect her children. If I am slain, all these around me, the whole clan, must perish." So a fortress and its defenders are represented as a mother and her children, Hos. 10: 14. Read 22: 26. 12. **Thou saidst**—ch. 28: 13, 15, at Bethel. References to the immutability of God's word, Num. 13: 19; Matt. 24: 35; Titus 1: 2; Heb. 6: 17. **I will surely do thee good**—This is Jacob's version of "I am with thee and will keep thee."

Having thus sought the divine protection, Jacob took measures to conciliate Esau. He prepared a present for him worthy of a great sheik, and so arranged it that it should impress his brother with the generosity and wealth of the giver. He then caused all to pass over the Jabbok and himself remained behind, doubtless that he might be alone in prayer once more, for he felt that the crisis of his life was come. For him, as for Caesar at the Rubicon, the "die was cast" when he crossed the Jabbok. He advances, not to gratify a lust for power, but to claim the land as the home of the true faith and the future birth place of the world's Redeemer.

II. JACOB'S PERSISTENCE. 24. **Jacob was left alone**—At such a moment the God-fearing man desires to lean hard on God. He had taken all the precautions that a prudent man could take, and the issue was now in higher hands. **There wrestled a man with him**—What is the meaning of this mysterious encounter? In the first place it was objectively real. It was no mere dream or vision. It is part of a narrative of plain facts, and the crippled thigh bore indubitable testimony to the reality of the angel's touch. Notice secondly, that the "Man" and not Jacob is the aggressor. Jacob does not assault him, but he seizes hold of Jacob. Jacob is on the defensive and pits his strength against his foe until he discovers he is wrestling with Omnipotence, then, and not till then, he betakes himself to supplication. In this the patriarch's attitude towards God is set forth. "His practical self-reliance was not duly subordinated to that absolute reliance which ought to be placed in the Author of our being and salvation. Hence he had been betrayed into intrusive, dubious, and even sinister courses, which in the retributive providence of God had brought, and were yet to bring, him into many troubles and perplexities. The hazard of his present situation arose chiefly from his former unjustifiable practices towards his brother. He is now to learn a lesson of unreserved reliance upon God." (Murphy). "He was going forward to meet Esau under the impression that there was no other reason why he should not inherit the land but only his wrath, and pretty confident that by his superior talent, his mother-wit, he could make a tool of this stupid, generous brother of his. And the danger was that if Jacob's device had succeeded, he would have been confirmed in these impressions, and have believed that he had won the land from Esau, with God's help certainly, but still by his own indomitable pertinacity of purpose and skill in dealing with men. If Jacob is to get the land he must take it as a gift, which he is not prepared to do." (Dods). "All along, Jacob's life had been the struggle of a clever and strong, a pertinacious and enduring, a self-confident and self-sufficient person, who was sure of the result only when he helped himself—a contest with God, who wished to break his strength and wisdom, in order to bestow upon him real strength in divine weakness, and real wisdom in divine folly." (Kurtz). **A man**—In Hos. 12: 4, 5 he is called the "angel," in vs. 28 and 30 he is called "God." He was no doubt the "Angel of the covenant," afterwards God manifest in the flesh—Christ Jesus. **The breaking of the day**—It was a protracted struggle. Jacob's tenacity of purpose and endurance were unconquerable. 25. While life lasts, Jacob will not yield. Just when he thinks his own strength is going to give him the victory, he is made to feel how really helpless he is in God's hands. The touch of omnipotence wins a moral as well as a physical triumph. His will is conquered. His own power gone he clings to God's power. "This is the turning point of the strange drama. Henceforth Jacob feels himself strong, not in himself, but in the Lord and in the power of his might." (Murphy). Touched the