

December 4

If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? Luke 11:13

IF the Lord's consecrated people could

LUKE 11:13 CONTEXT

R1945 "LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY... *Luke 11:1-13.—Golden Text.—"Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you."—Luke 11:9.*

THE first suggestion of this lesson is the inquiry, Why did the disciples ask the Lord to teach them how to pray? were not the Jews a praying people, and were not the prayers of the righteous acceptable to God from the beginning of the world? Yes, the Jews were a praying people, and their prayers, when devout and sincere, and in harmony with the expressed will of God, were acceptable, and were answered. So also were the prayers of others before the Jewish age began...

We find those descendants of Adam who had respect to the will and promise of God offering to God acceptable typical sacrifices in harmony with his arrangement, thereby expressing both their faith in the promise, and their desire for full harmony and communion. Thus Abel and Seth and all the godly ancients sacrificed; and through these typical sacrifices they approached God, they walked with God, and had the evidence in their own hearts that they pleased God, as it is written,—*"By faith Abel offered... sacrifice...by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts. By faith, Enoch, ...before his translation had this testimony, that he pleased God. By faith, Noah...became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."*—Heb. 11:5-8...

With the typical adoption by God of Abraham's family and the institution by the law of Moses of the typical national sacrifices, the privileges of approach to God through these, and of communion with him, was systematically taught by the law and the prophets. Consequently, in the nation of Israel we have multiplied instances of earnest and believing prayer; and instances, too, thank God, of the gracious hearing and answering of their prayers...

Therefore it was not because the disciples had never been taught to pray to God, that they inquired of Jesus as to the acceptable way; but, perceiving his intimate communion with God, and that God always promptly heard and answered him, they evidently felt that there must be something in his manner of approach to God which secured such prompt recognition and answers, and they would know the secret of his power. The secret of his power with God was in the fact of his full and complete harmony with the will of God; and this likewise is the secret of power among all of God's people. True, we, being imperfect, cannot say, as did he, "I do always those things that please him" (John 8:29); but, realizing our imperfection, we can come with humble confessions of our shortcomings and with faith in his love and mercy to be exercised toward us in his own appointed way. And then we are acceptable in the beloved One.

Jesus taught us how to pray by a simple illustration which shows (1) The proper reverential attitude of the believer toward God,—*"Our Father which art in heaven,*

all be brought to the point where the chief aim in life, the burden of all their prayers, would be that they might have a larger measure of the Spirit of the Lord, the spirit of holiness, the spirit of Truth, the Spirit of Christ, the spirit of a sound mind, what a blessing it would mean! If then they should

hallowed be thy name." (2) A full acquiescence in, and perfect accord with, the will of God for the blessing of the whole world through the coming Kingdom of Christ, which is also a recognition of the preparatory redemptive work by his sacrificial death—*"Thy Kingdom come."* (3) The earnest desire that the will of God may be done in earth as it is done in heaven. (4) An expression of our dependence upon God for the supply of our daily needs, with an acknowledgement that we do not need luxuries, but will be content with the "bread and water" assured through the Prophet. This may also be considered a petition for the bread of life for our spiritual sustenance—*"Give us this day our daily bread."* (5) Request for forgiveness of sins in his own appointed way (through Christ), at the same time impressing upon ourselves the necessity for exercising toward others the same spirit of forgiveness, and stating that we have thus forgiven all our debtors—*"Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy."* (6) Earnest desire for his assistance in the hour of temptation or trial, that we may not be overcome by it, and thus led to sin and thus brought under the power of the Evil One—*"Abandon us not in temptation [or trial], but deliver us from evil."* This implies a determination to resist sin, as well as a leaning upon God for assistance. Such must be the attitude of the soul in every approach toward God in prayer.

Verses 5-13 are blessed assurances of our Heavenly Father's love and solicitude for us, which should fill our hearts with the deepest gratitude and responsive love, and which should strengthen our faith and our earnest desire to come often to his footstool and tarry long in his presence, assured that if we come in the frame of mind indicated by our blessed Lord, we shall never be turned away empty; *"for every one that asketh [thus], receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."* And the thing received will be neither harmful nor useless. It will not be a stone for bread, nor a serpent for a fish, nor a scorpion for an egg; but it will be something good and wholesome; for the Lord "knows how to give good gifts unto his children." Christian, we need not tell you this: you have proved it well. And yet, praise the Lord! we have not exhausted his bountiful grace. "Still there's more to follow." "Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you." "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." The thing we need most, for which our Father is most pleased to have us seek and pray, is the spirit of his holiness.—*Verse 13.*"

LUKE 11:13

Luk 11:13 KJV "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

E225 "Our text institutes a comparison between kind earthly parents giving natural food to their children, and our kind heavenly Parent giving his holy Spirit to them that ask him... When, therefore, we pray for the

wrestle with the Lord until the breaking of the day, their hold upon Him would be sure to bring the desired blessing. The Lord has revealed Himself to His people for the very purpose of giving them *this* blessing; nevertheless, He withholds it until they learn to appreciate and earnestly desire it. R2866

holy Spirit, and to be filled with the Lord's Spirit, we are to look about us and find the provision which he has made for the answer to these prayers, which he has thus inspired and directed.

We find this provision in the Word of truth; but it is not enough to find *where* it is: if we desire to be filled we must eat... He who will not eat of a full table will be empty and starved, as truly as though there were no food...

It is absolutely useless for us to pray Lord, Lord, give us the Spirit, if we neglect the Word of truth which that Spirit has supplied for our filling. If we merely pray for the Spirit and do not use the proper means to obtain the Spirit of truth, we will continue to be at most only "babes in Christ," seeking outward signs, in proof of relationship to the Lord, instead of the inward witness, through the Word of truth, which he has provided."

R3153 "The miraculous gifts of the primitive Church could come only through apostolic hands; but the spirit, in the sense that we still enjoy it, the mind of Christ, the mind of God, with all the fruits and graces thereof, is still the privilege of the Lord's people, and dependent not upon apostolic or other hands, but upon our heavenly Father and upon the zeal with which we seek by prayer and every endeavor to have his mind, his disposition, controlling our thoughts, our words, our conduct. It is God's good pleasure to give us this spirit of love; but he gives it only to those who desire and seek it with patient perseverance."

R3665 "The holy Spirit is the spirit of love—to God and to man. It cannot be given to us under present conditions except gradually, as the old selfish, wrong spirit is deposited from our hearts."

R2006 "The graces of the holy Spirit are specially stated to be open to our requests and corresponding efforts."

E223-225 "The Heavenly Father is pleased to have us desire and ask for more and more of the holy Spirit—a disposition more and more fully in harmony with his Spirit: and all who thus desire and ask and seek it shall obtain their good desires; the Father will be pleased to so order the affairs of such that hindrances to the Spirit, whether in them or in their environment, shall be overcome, that his loving Spirit may abound in them—that they may be filled with the Spirit. But in this there is no suggestion of necessity for fresh baptisms of the holy Spirit: the baptism came at the beginning, and now all there remains to do is to open the sluices in every direction, so as to let the holy Spirit of love and truth penetrate into and permeate every action, word and thought of our beings. We need divine aid, the operation of the Lord's wisdom and providence, to show us what clogs the sluices and to help us remove the obstructions.

The Spirit of holiness in abundance can only be received by those who earnestly desire it and seek it by prayer and effort.

The mind or spirit of the world must be driven out of our hearts, in proportion as we would have them filled with the holy Spirit, mind, influence. Self-will must also give place. And because it is in proportion as we are emptied of all things else that we are ready to receive of his fullness, therefore the Lord would have us come into this condition of earnest desire for filling with his Spirit of holiness, that we may be willing and anxious to displace and eradicate every other contrary influence and will."

GROWTH IN THE HOLY SPIRIT 2 PETER 1:5-11

R3089 "Giving all diligence to add to our faith virtue [fortitude]; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance [self-control]; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity [love]...For if ye do these things ye shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.—Verses 5-11...

The race for the prize of our high calling is still before us, and we are yet in the enemy's country, surrounded by many subtle and powerful foes, so that if we would be successful we must "fight the good fight of faith," remembering, too, that "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but [God's Truth is] mighty to the pulling down of the strongholds" of error and superstition and of inbred sin; and remembering, also, that "we wrestle not with flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."—2Cor. 10:4; Eph. 6:12...

Add to your faith virtue—true excellence of character, such excellence of character as will mark you as separate from the world and its spirit. In all such the world will see those moral qualities which they must approve, however they may oppose our faith... Sterling honesty, truth and fair dealing in all business relations; moral integrity, in all social relations; manifestly clean hands and a pure heart, and a bridled tongue that works no ill to a neighbor... All of these are indispensable features of that virtuous character which must be added to our faith. The clean hands will not dabble in anything that is not virtuous: they will have nothing to do with unrighteous schemes or projects in business. The pure heart will not devise evil things, or harbor evil thoughts, or plot mischief. And the bridled tongue will not be given to evil speaking, but will hold its peace when it cannot speak well and wisely. But the promptings of virtue go further than merely these negative features which refuse to do anything which would work ill to a neighbor; they incite not only to passive, but also to active, goodness—in benevolent charity which seeks to alleviate suffering, to sympathize with sorrow, to comfort those in distress and to elevate and bless others—to assist "all men as we have opportunity."

R4808 On "virtue" in this verse: "It is *fortitude*, strength of character in righteousness."

R2037 "Beginning with those who already have some knowledge, enough to be a basis for *faith*, he exhorts them to add to their faith fortitude (common version, "virtue");

that is to say, he implies that if they hold to their faith against the attacks of the enemy it will develop *fortitude*, an added grace of character. And when he says, "Add to your fortitude knowledge," we understand him to mean that if faith be held firmly, and fortitude of character result, this, under the Spirit's guidance, will bring the faithful one to deeper and wider expanses of *knowledge*; or, as the same Apostle suggests (2 Pet. 3:18), the faithful one will *grow* in both grace and knowledge, and the holy Spirit, through its begetting, will enable such to know (appreciate) the deep things of God, the things freely given unto such by God, the knowledge of God resulting from our experience in the school of Christ. It is concerning this knowledge, not merely concerning the intricacies of doctrinal matters, but the heart sympathy and communion with the Lord himself, that the Apostle Paul exclaimed, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."—Phil. 3:8.

This knowledge, received into a good and honest heart, will bring forth the fruitage or grace of character here termed "*self-control*" (common version, "temperance"). As is elsewhere stated, "He that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself," controls himself, purges out more and more of the old leaven. Following and connected with the attainment of such self-control would come *patience*: for the self-mastery would teach the necessity for sympathy with and patience toward others. This patience in turn would lead to and develop the next grace mentioned; namely, *piety*—a condition in which the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, influencing all the thoughts and words and deeds. This condition in turn develops *brotherly kindness*—a love for all who are brethren and yoke fellows in the cause of righteousness and truth, the cause of God. And brotherly kindness in turn leads to that still broader and deeper experience designated the chief of all graces; namely, *love*, love for God, love for the brethren, love deep and pure and true, which thinketh no evil and doth not puff itself up, and is not easily offended, rejoices always in the truth and never in iniquity, the climax of Christian attainment in the present life; the grace of all graces, which never fadeth, and which will but be perfected when we receive the new resurrection body."

R4809 "LET US GIVE ALL DILIGENCE IN THESE MATTERS..."

With all our striving and watchfulness, however, we shall not be able, in our present condition, to reach our ideal. Perfection is something which can only be approximated in the present life. But *the measure of our effort to attain it* will prove the measure of our faithfulness and earnest desire to do so. And that effort will not be unfruitful."

R5912 "THEY GO FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH" "*Be ye filled with the Spirit.*"—*Ephesians 5:18...*

We should see that the Holy Spirit of God abounds in us more and more as we go on in our Heavenward course...

Sometimes the Lord's children say, "I do desire to be filled with the Lord's Spirit, but it seems as if my capacity is so small. I wish to have His Spirit in large measure, but I am unable to be what I long to be. I am not satisfied with my attainments." But if we are

striving earnestly and prayerfully to become like Christ, let us not be discouraged. Let us remember that if we keep filled to our present capacity, this very infilling will enlarge our capacity. Then our earthen vessel will hold more of the Holy Spirit. This, in turn, still further enlarges our capacity; and so the expanding and filling goes on. Thus it is possible for us to be filled continually...

DAILY SELF-EXAMINATION NECESSARY...

The spirit, or disposition, of the world will seek to invade the dominion of the New Creature. But the New Creature must be on the alert to see that his mind and body are freed from everything that would not be in fullest harmony with God's Holy Spirit. Each one should seek to judge himself in this respect...

The Spirit of the Lord dwelling in us in fullness, as it should be, will cause our entire being to be so absorbed by the principles of righteousness laid down in the Lord's Word, to be so in love with the Heavenly things, Heavenly hopes, Heavenly prospects, that everything else will be of no value to us. And this will be more and more our blessed experience if we continue faithfully in the narrow way, if we "follow on to know the Lord."

But if, on the contrary, we find ourselves making provision for the flesh, making worldly plans; if we find ourselves inclined to lay up treasures on earth instead of in Heaven, we should take alarm, and should ask ourselves whether we are deficient, whether we are neglecting the means of grace—prayer alone with God, study of His Word, meditation upon the glorious things to which we have been called, watching ourselves as to our growth in the fruits of the Spirit. If we find that we are considerably controlled by the spirit of contention, we should ask ourselves, "Are we seeking to deal justly and equitably with others—to give them their rights and not to intrude upon them? Are we cultivating the love which is forbearing, forgiving and kind?"—2 Timothy 2:24; Ephesians 4:31,32.

If we find after close introspection that we are in full sympathy with the spirit of love, and can see that we are gradually developing this crowning fruit of the Spirit, let us rejoice; for we should greatly deplore the matter if it were otherwise. If we find that we are controlled by this spirit of love, we may know that we are filled with the Spirit. This spirit of love will enlarge our hearts and minds, making us broader and nobler day by day.

But we need to continually watch and pray; for there is constant danger otherwise that we may be tripped up or stumbled either by our own faults or those of others. We are never safe from being side-tracked unless we go often to the Throne of Grace; we cannot be filled unless we keep very close to the great Fountain from which our infilling comes. We must daily carry our earthen pitcher to this Heavenly Fountain to be replenished; for we are leaky vessels. We are not to feel discouraged if we do not find in ourselves the rapid growth that we desire to see. Strong, sturdy trees that can withstand the fiercest storms are not developed in a day. Their growth is a slow, steady process. We should show our loyalty to the Lord by renewed effort every time we fail. He is looking at us not to see if we are perfect in the flesh—for He knows that we are not and can never be—but to see whether or

not we have the spirit of earnestness and loyalty which daily and hourly seeks to keep the body under and to cheerfully take up the cross.

BLESSED RESULTS OF SPIRIT'S INFILLING

The Christian is not to be like the worldling who seeks to drown his troubles and afflictions in drink or in pleasures, dissipations and frivolous diversions; but in every trouble he is to fly to the only true Source of solace and comfort and strength. This will drive away all anxiety and give him rest and peace even in the midst of trouble...

This unwavering trust in the Lord, this abiding rest of the soul, this zeal in God's service, is a matter of growth. "They go

from strength to strength," the Psalmist declares of the inhabitants of Zion. "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear," said our Lord of this class. (Psalm 84:7; Mark 4:28.) Notwithstanding the difficulties of life, these can continue to make melody in their hearts unto the Lord. They rejoice no matter what may be the outward earthly conditions. They can smile even through their tears, knowing that, according to His promise, all things are working together for their good. To attain this development is to be filled with the Spirit; and each consecrated disciple of Christ should reach this plane.

Some Christian writer has well said: "Wherever there has been a faithful following of the Lord in a consecrated heart, sev-

eral things have, sooner or later, inevitably followed. Meekness and quietness of spirit become in time the characteristics of the daily life. A submissive acceptance of the will of God, as it comes in the hourly events of each day, is manifested; pliability in the hands of God to do or to suffer all the good pleasure of His will; sweetness under provocation; calmness in the midst of turmoil and bustle; a yielding to the wishes of others [where there is no conflicting principle involved], and an insensibility to slights and affronts; absence of worry or anxiety; deliverance from care and fear--all these, and many other similar graces, are invariably found to be the natural outward development of that inward life which is 'hid with Christ in God.'

R2864 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0) ISRAEL--A PRINCE WITH GOD

--GEN. 32:1-32.--SEPT. 15--

Golden Text:--"Men ought always to pray and not to faint."--Luke 18:1

FLEEING from his father's home, Jacob traveled a distance of nearly five hundred miles to Chaldea, the original home of his grandfather Abraham, where his uncle Laban still lived. His esteem for the promise of God had made him a pilgrim and a stranger, a wanderer from home, just as Abraham's faithfulness to the call had taken him from home in the opposite direction. While the blessings God had promised to Jacob were earthly and temporal, and in these respects differed from the promises which are made to spiritual Israelites, nevertheless, in order to prove Jacob's worthiness of the blessings--in order to test his faith in God's promises, he was permitted to pass through various trying experiences and disappointments. One of these was a love-affair with Rachel, his cousin, for whom he served his uncle in all fourteen years, seven before he got her as a wife, and seven years afterward; his uncle taking a dishonest advantage of him in the arrangement. Nevertheless, we see Jacob's patience and persistency, and note with pleasure that he never for a moment seems to have doubted the promises of God that he should be blessed as the inheritor of the Abrahamic promise.

"Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," would seem to apply well to Jacob's career. So energetic was he in Laban's service, so successful in all that he undertook, so persevering, that his uncle soon considered his service indispensable, and was glad to make favorable terms with him to have him remain and take chief charge of his property. Shrewdly Jacob bargained for an interest in the increase of the flocks and herds, etc., as his salary, and practically became a partner. There was nothing dishonest in his making a bargain with Laban that all the brown sheep and streaked and speckled goats should be his; nor was there anything wrong in his scientifically increasing the proportionate numbers of these colored and speckled animals. Laban became aware, before long, that he had a very capable and shrewd son-in-law, and, moreover, that the Lord's blessing was with him. He fain would have had him remain permanently in Chaldea, but Jacob's mind was full of the Abrahamic promise and of the reiteration of that promise to himself in the vision at Bethel, and he desired to return to the land of promise. He surmised, however, not without good cause, that his uncle would use force to restrain him from leaving, or to take from him some of the cattle, etc., which were properly his under the contract, and hence he chose an opportunity for leaving when Laban was absent.

Laban was evidently a powerful sheik, having many servants, and indeed Jacob had become so by this time, as the narrative shows that he was able, shortly after, to give away as a present to his brother Esau, 220 goats, 220 sheep, 30 camels, 50 head of cattle and 20 asses. But when Laban pursued, with the full intention of bringing back Jacob, his family and servants and flocks and herds, God interfered, warning Laban in a dream, saying, "Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob from good to bad"--margin. In consequence of this dream, and Jacob's subsequent fair statement of his side of the case, showing clearly that he had not wronged Laban, but that Laban had repeatedly dealt hardly with him, he was let go on his way in peace.

If we draw a lesson from these incidents respecting ourselves, as heirs of the promises of God, spiritual Israelites, it would be that while our hearts are full of rejoicing in God's promises we should not expect these to come to us wholly without our effort to secure them. If God has promised us spiritual blessings, we should put forth the effort to attain these, just as Jacob had put forth his efforts to attain the temporal blessings promised him. If adversity seems to go

with us, and we meet with disappointments and more or less fraudulent conspiracy to take away from us our spiritual blessings, as Jacob met with disappointment which seemed for the time to interfere with his temporal blessings, we, like him, should patiently wait for the Lord, and trust and hope and labor on, knowing that the Lord will bring out the promised results in the end; knowing that he is on our part, and greater than all they that be against us.

We noticed in previous lessons the peaceable disposition of Abraham, and also of Isaac, and now we note that Jacob not only left home and abandoned his share in the father's house, and family property belonging to the birthright he had purchased, rather than quarrel with his brother, but that similarly in dealing with his uncle he refused to quarrel; he submitted himself; he trusted to the Lord to bring out the results rather than to his own strength for a conflict, either mental or physical. The Lord apparently would have the spiritual Israelites learn this lesson: "Seek peace and pursue it;" "Patiently wait for the Lord, and he will bring it to pass." It is not of God's arrangement that the spiritual Israelites should contend with carnal weapons; but rather that they should submit themselves to the powers that be, learning the lessons which accompany such submission; and have developed in them the faith, the trust, the hope in God, necessary to a maintenance of their relationship to him, and growth in his grace.

As Jacob and his caravan approached Palestine his confidence in God, and his reliance upon the Lord's promise to bless him, did not hinder him from taking a wise, generous, reasonable course for the conciliation of his brother. He did not stand upon his rights, and say: I purchased the inheritance, and was obliged to flee from it, and now I am differently situated, and will seek my first opportunity to take from Esau the cattle and substance which he received of my father's estate which are rightfully mine, and should there be any quarrel in the matter, let him look to his own side, for right is on my side and I may exert as much force as is necessary to obtain it. Quite to the contrary of this, Jacob said to himself: I care nothing for the earthly inheritance, I abandoned that all when I left home, and I do not intend to lay any claim to it, now or ever. I merely got what Esau did not appreciate, and now, if he can come to realize that I am not after the property, it will assuage his wrath, his malice, his envy. On the contrary, I will be generous to him; I will send him a valuable present, thus showing him that so far from wishing to take from him earthly goods I am disposed to give him more. Moreover, I will send such a message by my servants as will show him that I treat him as my superior--my lord, and that I rank myself as his inferior. He shall see that I am neither wishing to take the honors of his birthright nor its earthly emoluments, though all of these were purchased--I resign freely all of these temporal good things and honors, that I may have the Lord's favor, as represented in the original covenant with grandfather Abraham. He carried out his program successfully, and Esau became his friend. The lesson for spiritual Israelites along this line is,--We should not be sticklers for full justice and the last penny in earthly matters. Rather we may use the earthly mammon generously to make and keep the peace, and to forward our spiritual interests. Our readiness to do this will measure or gauge our appreciation of the spiritual interests, in comparison to which earthly blessings, "Mammon" should be esteemed as loss and dross.

A MODEL PRAYER

Jacob's prayer at the time he was anticipating a meeting with Esau is recorded in this lesson, and may be considered one of the

best examples of prayer to be found in God's Word. It is so full of confidence and trust in God. It recounts the original promise to Abraham, its renewal to Isaac, and its second repetition to Jacob at Bethel, and the Lord's promise there given him, that he would bring him again to his home country. It shows the humility of Jacob's mind, which cried out, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which thou hast shown unto thy servant; for with my staff [only] I passed over this Jordan [when fleeing from home], and now I am become two bands [great companies]." He tells the Lord of his fear of Esau, yet shows that his fear is offset by his confidence in the Almighty. It was at this time, and doubtless in answer to this prayer, that the angel of the Lord appeared to Jacob, and so full of faith in the power of God, and in the promise of God was Jacob that he laid physical hold upon the angel, declaring that he would never let go until he got a blessing.

Here, the lesson proper, relating to Jacob's struggle with the angel, comes in. The angel appeared as a man, as was frequently the case in olden times; Jacob had recognized him, nevertheless, and laying hold of him urged that he as God's representative, sent to meet him, should give him a blessing. We cannot suppose for a moment that the angel was not powerful enough to release himself from the grasp of Jacob, and hence that the wrestling and struggle between them kept up until the morning light, the angel vainly pleading, "Let me go," and Jacob as persistently holding on and declaring, "I will not let thee go unless thou bless me." We must suppose, on the contrary, that the Lord was well pleased to bless Jacob, and had sent the angel for this very purpose; and that the circumstances were intended as an opportunity to draw out Jacob's longing desires in this respect; to demonstrate to himself how much he really desired the Lord's favor, the Lord's blessing. And when the desired result had been obtained--when Jacob had evidenced the intensity of his desire for harmony with God and such blessing as God alone could give--then the blessing came--Jacob's victory. Not that Jacob prevailed to get from God, through his angel, something the Lord was not pleased to grant; but that he prevailed to obtain the coveted blessing by manifesting the zeal, the energy, the patience, and the faith which God was pleased to see and reward.

The lesson of the spiritual Israelite in this circumstance is in harmony with our Lord's words, "Men ought continuously to pray and not to faint." God wishes us to be persistent, and our persistence measures and indicates the depth of our desires. If the blessing in answer to our prayer does not come in the moment of asking we are to continue "instant in prayer,"--patiently waiting for the Lord's due time, faithfully trusting him that he is willing to give the blessing which he promised, even though he may for a time withhold it with a view to our becoming the more earnest in seeking it.

Although Jacob was a natural man, not a "new creature in Christ Jesus," nevertheless his prayer is a model one, in that he did not specify even the earthly things which had been promised him. All he asked was a blessing, in whatever manner the Lord might be pleased to give it. Alas, how many spiritual Israelites seem to have a much less keen appreciation of proprieties in such matters than had Jacob! Many ask and receive not because they ask amiss, for things to be consumed upon their earthly desires--wealth or fame or temporal good things. (Jas. 4:3.) How many forget that the Lord has already promised to take care of the temporal necessities of his spirit-begotten children, and to do for them better than they would know how to ask or to think. How few seem to remember that as new creatures our conditions and desires should be specially for the things that pertain to the new creature, and that it is this class of blessing the Lord invites us to ask for and to wrestle to obtain, assuring us that as earthly parents are pleased to give good gifts to their children, so our Heavenly Father is pleased to *give the holy spirit* to those who ask him. (Luke 11:13.)^{1} If the Lord's consecrated people could all be brought to the point where the chief aim in life, the burden of all their prayers, would be that they might have a larger measure of the spirit of the Lord, the spirit of holiness, the spirit of the truth, the spirit of Christ, the spirit of a sound mind, what a blessing it would mean! If, then, they should wrestle with the Lord until the breaking of the day their hold upon him would be sure to bring the desired blessing. The Lord has revealed himself to his people for the very purpose of giving them *this* blessing; nevertheless, he withholds it until they learn to appreciate and earnestly desire it.

Jacob got the blessing and with it a change of name. He was thenceforth called Israel, which signifies "Mighty with God." This new name would thenceforth be continually a source of encouragement to him, an incentive to fresh zeal and trust in the one whose blessing he had secured. All of Jacob's posterity adopted this name.

They were all known as children of Israel, or Israelites; for God acknowledged the name as applicable to all of the nation. Similarly, in antitype, we have Christ Jesus our Lord, the true, the antitypical Israel, the one who, through faith and obedience to the Father, has prevailed, has overcome the world and the flesh and the Adversary, and has received the divine blessing as the result of his struggle. He has been highly exalted and is declared now to be prince or ruler of the kings of the earth. He has sat down with the Father in his throne. --Rev. 1:5.

Nor does the analogy end here; for, as Jacob had twelve sons, so our Lord Jesus had twelve apostles; and these, and all who come into Christ through their ministry of the gospel, are accepted as the true, the spiritual, Israel. The same name belongs to all of these that belongs to the Head. As with fleshly Israel there were some who were "Israelites indeed," and others who were not, but of the synagogue of Satan, in the spiritual Israel there are nominal and real Israelites; and only the latter will ultimately obtain the blessing and be joint-heirs with Jesus Christ their Lord. And the name, "Victor," or "Mighty with God," will be a name which will apply to everyone of the Lord's faithful ones in the same manner that it applied to Jesus himself. Each one will be required to manifest his loyalty to the Lord, his faith, his trust, and only those who love the Lord and the promise he has made that they will hold on to his promise, and will not let him go without a blessing-- only such will receive the great blessing, only such will be able to overcome the world, the flesh and the Adversary. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith"--in God and in his promises.

ACKNOWLEDGING DIVINE FAVORS

Jacob had a method of marking the special manifestations of divine providence,--as when he called the place in which he wrestled with the angel Peniel; as a reminder that there he had been privileged to see, representatively, the Lord's face, to receive the Lord's blessing, the light of his countenance. Similarly, it is profitable to the spiritual Israelites that we should make note in some special manner of all the Lord's mercies and providences toward us. Many feel poor as respects the Lord's favor and blessing, simply because they have failed to let them make a proper impression upon their hearts at the time they were received. Divine favors are soon lost from our leaky earthen vessels unless special notation is made at the time, either upon the tablets of memory, or in some other manner to refresh memory. Doubtless we would all have more Bethels and more Peniels did we but follow the course of setting up some kind of monuments, and there entering into some special covenant or vow with the Lord in return for his mercies. Quite in line with this thought, that Christians generally have multitudinous blessings, and favors more than they fully recognize, the Allegheny Church has for some years held "Cottage Meetings" in various quarters every Wednesday evening, for prayer, praise and testimony. And the testimonies called for are not the "years ago" sort, however good, but the fresh living experience of the *week*. And as each *seeks* for fresh evidences of divine love and watchcare daily, each finds that he has far more cause for rejoicing and thanksgiving and encouragement than he would have been aware of without such watchfulness and notation. Let us daily and weekly as well as yearly rear to God our Ebenezers, if we would increase our faith and joy and love.

As Saul of Tarsus, in receiving his blessing of the Lord, received also a thorn in the flesh, which buffeted him continually through the remainder of his experiences, but which he learned ultimately to appreciate as a channel of divine blessing, as a reminder of divine favor, so it was with Jacob. At the very time that he was wrestling with the angel and getting the blessing, he received a wound, a troublesome reminder of the blessing, which continued with him probably through the remainder of his days, causing him to limp. The record is that the angel touched him in the hollow of his thigh, probably touched the sciatic nerve, causing the sinew to shrink and a slight dislocation of the joint. The lesson not only was one for Jacob himself to the remainder of his days, leading him to remember his dependence upon the Lord, and that he owed everything he possessed to the divine blessing, but it served afterward with his posterity as a continual reminder of the same thing; for the record is that thenceforth the Israelites would not eat of this sinew from any animal. Jacob's "thorn in the flesh," no doubt, served to keep him humble, even as Paul's served to remind him that he was what he was by the grace of God, and not in any wise of himself. Similarly, the Lord permits certain weaknesses of the flesh to affect his spiritual children in the present time *favorably*. Undoubtedly some of our difficulties and trials, physical as well as others, are amongst our greatest blessings, working out for us a better portion in the future, by working in us faith, patience, true reliance upon the Lord.

{1} Dec. 4 Manna, Luke 11:13