

(Gen. 32:24) - Jacob is alone and helpless. No plotting or scheming could help him now. He is shut up to the sovereign power of God. His salvation is totally in the hands of God. Those whom the Lord is pleased to save and to whom He will reveal His mercy in Christ Jesus will all be brought to the place of human sinfulness and inability. When the Holy Spirit brings us to conviction, He leaves us no room for boasting or glorying in the flesh (*Psalm 107:1-6, 11-13; 1 Cor. 1:26-31*). *“There wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day”* - This was one of many preincarnate appearances of Christ. He often appeared in human form to Old Testament saints as a token and pledge of His future incarnation. He appeared to Adam and Eve in the Garden before and after the Fall. He appeared to Abraham a few times to establish and confirm the promise. He appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and here He appears to Jacob. Jacob was laid hold of by the Lord in sovereign power and purpose. This brought Jacob to lay hold of Christ in a physical, mental, and spiritual conflict which had to be resolved. God is sovereign. He will have His people and His people will have Him as their God (*John 6:37-39*). The Lord is King by right, decree, and by His death for all His people. He will also be the one and only Savior and King in the hearts of His people by true submission and surrender (*Psalm 110:3; Rom. 10:9-10*).

“They wrestled until the breaking of the day” - This was no brief and passing encounter. Great issues are at stake; eternal matters will be resolved as Christ personally meets Jacob. God will bless and use Jacob, but it will be a conquered, subdued, and surrendered Jacob. This wrestling is a metaphor for the warfare that goes on within our hearts and minds when the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, righteousness, and judgment in bringing us to Christ by God-given faith. Having given us spiritual life, we struggle against our natural selves and the unbelief that dominates us. But Christ is omnipotent and effectual, even invincible, in this great work. By the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, He convinces us that there is no other way or hope of salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life but in Him.

(Gen. 32:25) - *“When He saw that He prevailed not against Jacob, He touched his thigh and crippled him”* - The Lord could have easily subdued Jacob, but this conflict was ordered by God Himself, and the outcome was never in doubt. But, for His glory in Christ, God always brings His people to see their need of His grace in Christ. So, the Lord struck a crippling blow and Jacob went down. God always brings us to our knees and makes us willing to submit to Him for all salvation and righteousness (*John 6:44-45*). Through His Gospel revelation and invincible call, He brings us to see and experience the depravity, sinfulness, and frailty of the flesh, the emptiness of this world, as well as bringing us to see the glory of God in salvation accomplished for us by Christ. He causes us to submit to Christ as our righteousness.

(Gen. 32:26) - The Lord had touched Jacob and then expressed His desire to leave. But Jacob held on, crying for the Lord's blessing and power - *“I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.”* What is the lesson for us here? Do we suppose that the Lord would be so cruel as to wound Jacob (wound us spiritually) only to leave us in that awful state? The Lord never brings His children in conviction to see their sinfulness and hopelessness in themselves only to leave them in the agony of sin and unbelief. It is His glory to show them His greatness, power, and grace to save them from their sins and bring them to faith in Christ. Jacob had had an unusual revelation. He had wrestled with the Lord and had been wounded. But the battle was not over for Jacob until he would be assured of the Lord's permanent blessing upon him and His peace within him. This was life or death for Jacob - a battle that would not be fought again. He had heard promises of God's blessings. Now he wanted them in truth from

the assurance of God's Word. He was still Jacob, his past clouded with sin. He was a wanderer in a strange country and must still face Esau, his angry brother. He knew he was no better off for this experience unless the Lord gave him HIS approval, acceptance, and comforting presence.

(Gen. 32:27-28) - The Lord asking Jacob, *"What is thy name?"* is the equivalent of confronting him with his sinfulness and depravity. In our own conversions, God the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin so that we confess our name as fallen, depraved sinners (Jacobs). Like Jacob, by nature we all have tried to lay claim to God's blessings by self-righteous works and self-deception. In conversion we are brought by God to see the reality of our dead works in light of the reality of God's grace in Christ (*Php. 3:7-9*). In conversion we desire the Lord's true blessings of salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life that can only be found by God's free, sovereign grace in Christ, by virtue of the merits of His righteousness imputed alone (*John 16:8-11*). The Lord changed his name from *"Jacob"* to *"Israel"* which means *"prevailing with God."* This victory and position is not one achieved by human merit, works, or will, but only by God's grace in Christ (*John 1:11-13; Rom. 8:14-16; 9:15-16; Eph. 1:3-7*).

(Gen. 32:29) - Jacob then asked, *"Tell me, I pray Thee, THY name."* Jacob has been brought by God truly to seek the glory of the Lord. The Lord replied, *"Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name?"*. We can only speculate, but God had already revealed to Jacob what He wanted Jacob to know of Him. God reveals His redemptive glory equally to all His children in the Gospel (*Jer. 31:34; John 6:44-45; 17:3; Heb. 8:11*). He brings us to know Christ as our righteousness (*Rom. 10:1-4*). From this knowledge we grow as God is pleased to reveal more of Himself. In the Old Testament, God revealed only that which was necessary for the salvation of His people, but there were many things yet to be revealed and only revealed to us in the New Testament (*Matt. 13:16-17; Eph. 3:5-6; 1 Pet. 1:10-12*). One thing was certain - Jacob would not be carried beyond the bounds of faith prescribed for the age in which he lived, and that faith looked forward to the coming of Christ to fulfill all righteousness for His people (*John 8:56*). We believe God as He has been pleased to reveal Himself to us, and true faith demands nothing more.

(Gen. 32:30) - *"Peniel"* which means *"the face of God"* - *"for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."* When Moses asked the Lord, *"Show me Thy glory,"* the Lord answered, *"I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy"* (*Exod. 33:19*). But then the Lord told Moses, *"Thou canst not see My face: for there shall no man see Me, and live"* (*Exod. 33:20*). But Moses wrote earlier in *Exodus 33:11* that while he was in the Tabernacle *"the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend."* The Apostle John wrote that *"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him"* (*John 1:18*). Are all these verses showing a contradiction? NO! The point being made in all these verses is simply that sinners cannot see the glory of God or approach God and live apart from the revelation that God gives to His people in and by the Lord Jesus Christ - *"For God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"* (*2 Cor. 4:6*). This is what Jacob, by the grace of God, saw when he saw the face of God. God's face is that which identifies and distinguishes Him as the one living and true God, the God of all grace, the God Who justifies the ungodly based on the righteousness of His Son freely imputed and received by God-given faith. This is the only way any sinner can see and approach God and live. To approach God without Christ is certain death.