

Jacob, after the adventures with Laban and the famous Mizpeh benediction of chapter 31, is on his way to his homeland and still has what is probably a justifiable fear of his brother Esau. The character of Esau is not dependable, however, and we know that he has also prospered and cares little now for the things of Jacob. But the question in Jacob's mind is still one of doubt as to how he can placate Esau. He devises an elaborate scheme including the dividing of his possessions and the sending in advance a great gift. *His hope is that Esau will be pacified and he and his family will be safe.* When all the preparations are in order, the companies are set, the plan in progress, Jacob, as we read in verse 24 is left alone and has the experience of wrestling with the angel of the Lord...a theophany. This is the famous Peniel experience and it answers the question for Jacob about God's strength. Is God strong enough to sustain him in the meeting with His brother? Is God able to maintain him in that difficult meeting? While we do not read the answer in so many words, we do read it in the assurance of the Divine messenger in verse 28, accompanied with the change of his name to Israel (God's prince) and the assurance that *He will prevail.* We learn from this the important lesson of trust: the strength of the Lord is our sustaining power.

- II. Discussion. In bringing the Jacob experience into our own world (we do not need the experience, we need the lesson it teaches) we observe that God's strength is enough to secure His purposes and we gain this knowledge in the following ways.
- A. We claim His Word. No, I am not going into a name it and claim it mode...I am simply saying we take His word and hold it to be true. Things that are anchored in the Word of God are certain, things we just dream about are speculative and may not come to pass at all. This is only one of the many reasons that *we need to be students of the Word of God.*
- B. We have Him care for the Pathway. *It is not wrong to make plans in accord with the will of God and put our own intelligence to work. But necessarily we need to turn the whole process over to God and make our plans in accord with His revealed will. I believe in preparation for most things but that preparation must be in harmony with what God has said and we realistically turn the journey over to Him. Psalm 32 gives a good rationale for this.*