

Let us now lift our hearts along with our eyes and hands to God in the heavens. Let us stir ourselves up to take hold of God as we seek His face. Let us give Him the glory due His Name. Let us now worship God, who is a spirit, in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking these kinds of people to worship Him. *Lam. 3:41; John 17:1; Isa 64:7; Psa. 27:8; 29:2; John 4:23,24.* –Matthew Henry (edited by O. Palmer Robertson in *A Way to Pray*).

THE BAPTIST CATECHISM
AS PRINTED BY THE CHARLESTON ASSOCIATION IN 1813

(Presented here as originally published – this does not constitute a full endorsement of the Riverside Baptist Church)

112. Q. What do we pray for in the fifth petition?

A. In the fifth petition, which is, And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors (Mt. 6:12), we pray that God, for Christ's sake, would freely pardon all our sins (Ps. 51:1, 2, 7, 9; Dan. 9:17-19); which we are rather encouraged to ask because of His grace we are enabled from the heart to forgive others (Lk. 11:4; Mt. 18:35).

113. Q. What do we pray for in the sixth petition?

A. In the sixth petition, which is, And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil (Mt. 6:13), we pray that God would either keep us from being tempted to sin (Mt. 26:31), or support and deliver us when we are tempted (2 Cor. 12:8).

THE RIVERSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH

55 Avenue A

P. O. Box 628

Richwood, WV 26261

B. H. Seacrist, Jr., Pastor

Phone 304 846 6406

Email: branthsi@msn.com

Website: www.riversidebaptistchurchwv.com

WXTH-LP 101.7 FM – In Richwood

Services:

Sunday Morning 11:00 AM

Sunday Evening 6:00 PM

Prayer and Bible Study Wednesday Evening 6:30 PM

WCWV 92.9 FM – 8:00 AM Sunday Morning

THE RIVERSIDE BAPTIST REPORT

THE RIVERSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Pillar and ground of the Truth” -- 1 Timothy 3:15

Volume 10, No. 50

December 10, 2017

JACOB'S PRAYER

And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. Genesis 32:9-10

We have been well-advised to pray the scriptures. Matthew Henry, in his classic work *A Method for Prayer*, seized upon that thought and so provided many scripture texts to incorporate as our own in prayer. A more recent work by Donald S. Whitney ably invokes the same concept. For many years the opening phrase of Genesis 32:10 has appeared in my own prayers and exposes over and over the realization that I am, as was Jacob, unworthy to say the least. Such was surely in the mind of Paul as he claimed to be the chief of sinners. While there is much recorded in the life of Jacob that warrants him being accused of supplanting, there is much to encourage emulation, and this is one of those cases.

The story of Jacob leading to this point is among some of the more generally known of biblical accounts. It lends itself to romanticizing and adaptation to storybook like accounts. While the facts are often accurate in these, much is left unsaid.

Twenty years had passed since the encounter with the Lord at Bethel and the dream there had a lasting impression on Jacob. Now, remembering the promise made to Abraham, confirmed to Isaac, and then passed on to him, he was driven to seek the favor of the Lord on that basis. He had left the rule of his father-in-law at the word of the Lord and yet, earthly fears prevailed. Not leaning fully upon

both the recent word and the long-standing promise he had sought to appease Esau. The threats made by his brother were real to him and he, no doubt, remembered that he had practiced gross deception. The message to Esau was an appeal for peace and reconciliation. What he learned was that Esau was coming to meet him.

And so, he prays to the covenant God of Abraham and Isaac. It begins with the confession of unworthiness to have been treated in such a merciful fashion. It would seem that Jacob had grown in the realization of his own sin and the fact that there was nothing to recommend him to the favor of God. With every new encounter with the Lord, self is more exposed and, so he acknowledged that all that had occurred in his life had been an act of mercy – especially the forgiveness of sin. He recounted the last time he had been in this place that he had nothing but the staff in his hand. He was a penniless fugitive. Rather than gloat at the wealth he had obtained, he confessed it to all be of grace.

How sweetly do we recall, *Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Psalms 85:10*. Even so, Jacob added truth to the blessedness received at the hand of the Lord. The encounter at Bethel twenty years earlier was not lost on Jacob. The being and existence of God was made manifest

in that the Lord had spoken to him directly. At such he learned of Him who is “the way, the truth, and the life.” Of particular importance was that Jacob, by that experience, had learned that the Lord had a vested interest in his life and prosperity along the way. Furthermore, he had learned that the heavenly host had an interest in what he was about and would be a means of provision to him. Earlier in this chapter we learned that Jacob was met by a host of angels and he identified them as God’s host and commemorated the place. Surely, his mind went back to the earlier scene at Bethel with the angels ascending and descending. The sense that he had of continuing care was confirmed by the sight of and remembrance of the angels.

At Bethel, Jacob had been given a real God-consciousness that would serve him all his days. At every act of kindness and blessing, he was reinforced in the truth of God and the faithfulness that is true of Him alone. Thus, he is reminded that the same promise given to Abraham was his to claim as well: *And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will*

keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. Genesis 28:14-15. This was the ground of his appeal to God at this time.

The fact that he had “become two bands” has a dual reference. Certainly, it spoke of his rise from being a fugitive to great wealth. But, more importantly was that he had acted to assure that his family would not be annihilated by his vengeful brother. Abraham had acted in faith when he would have sacrificed Isaac believing that he would be raised. Jacob acted in the defense of the promise by seeking to assure that some of his seed would survive.

He now did what all true believers do in such desperation. He cast himself on the mercy of God and prayed for what was promised. His fleshly form and human nature saw only danger and certain destruction, but a regenerated heart casts itself on the promises of God. These are they which are found to be “yea and amen” in Christ Jesus our Lord. Jacob was given much by which to be assured. But, we see Jesus, our risen Lord having conquered in His death and resurrection all that gives rise to fear in us. So, we would claim over again this prayer of Jacob and await the sure mercies of our God. *bhs*

The Westminster Shorter Catechism rightly answers the question, “What is the chief end of man?” by saying, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.” When the writers of the catechism taught us this, they did not say these are humankind’s chief ends, but our chief end. The word is singular. Both glorifying God and enjoying Him together form one aim. There was a time when I did regard them as two different aims, even assigning different time frames to them. I was expected, so I thought, to glorify God in this life, and then in eternity I would get to enjoy Him. Perhaps I unconsciously thought of these two parts of our aim in the same way some people think about work and retirement. You work for forty or so years, then you get to enjoy being retired, but “ne’er the twain shall meet.” Don’t expect to enjoy your work and avoid all work in your retirement. The truth is, though, that we cannot glorify God—either by our lives or by worship—unless we are enjoying Him. How could you praise someone whom you don’t enjoy? How could you genuinely seek to honor

someone by your conduct merely out of a sense of obligation? As we probe these questions, we can see that glorifying God and enjoying Him are really two sides of the same coin. John Piper even goes a bit further. He says, “The chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying him forever” (emphasis added).¹ Piper is fond of saying, “God is most glorified in me when I am most satisfied in Him.” That is, to the extent that we find our delight in God, we glorify Him. Jerry Bridges in, *I Give You Glory, O God: Honoring His Righteousness in Your Private Worship*

Scripture abounds in illustrations of God’s faithfulness. More than four thousand years ago he said, “While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease” (Gen. 8:22). Every year that comes furnishes a fresh witness to God’s fulfillment of this promise. In Genesis 15 we find that Jehovah declared unto Abraham, “Thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them. . . . But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again” (vv. 13–16). Centuries ran their weary course. Abraham’s descendants groaned amid the brick-kilns of Egypt. Had God forgotten his promise? No, indeed. Read Exodus 12:41, “And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.” Through Isaiah the Lord declared, “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (7:14). Again centuries passed, but “When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman” (Gal. 4:4). God is true. His Word of Promise is sure. In all his relations with his people God is faithful. He may be safely relied upon. No one ever yet really trusted him in vain. We find this precious truth expressed almost everywhere in the Scriptures, for his people need to know that faithfulness is an essential part of the Divine character. This is the basis of our confidence in him. But it is one thing to accept the faithfulness of God as a Divine truth, it is quite another to act upon it. God has given us many “exceeding great and precious promises,” but are we really counting on his fulfillment of them? Are we actually expecting him to do for us all that he has said? Are we resting with implicit assurance on these words, “He is faithful that promised” (Heb. 10:23)? There are seasons in the lives of all when it is not easy, no not even for Christians, to believe that God is faithful. Our faith is sorely tried, our eyes bedimmed with tears, and we can no longer trace the outworkings of his love. Our ears are distracted with the noises of the world, harassed by the atheistic whisperings of Satan, and we can no longer hear the sweet accents of his still small voice. Cherished plans have been thwarted, friends on whom we relied have failed us, a professed brother or sister in Christ has betrayed us. We are staggered. We sought to be faithful to God, and now a dark cloud hides him from us. We find it difficult, yea, impossible, for carnal reason to harmonize his frowning providence with his gracious promises. Ah, faltering soul, severely tried fellow pilgrim, seek grace to heed Isaiah 50:10, “Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.” When you are tempted to doubt the faithfulness of God, cry out, “Get thee hence...

Arthur Pink, *The Attributes of God*