

## POWER WITH GOD

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"And He said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: For as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed"-Genesis 32:28.

The above portion of scripture contains a glorious promise which is available to all God's people if they will appropriate it. We can indeed have power with God. According to some people of our day, having or using the power OF God is the most important truth available to us. In reality however, as we will notice in this message, power WITH God is the most important asset of the full overcomer.

We are not at all belittling God's dynamic force. Job chapters 38 to 41 record some marvelous exhibitions of God's majesty. His power is manifest in thunderings and lightnings. He has power to give the rain and also to restrain it. The wild beasts, which are mightier than men, are subject to the control and authority of God.

Throughout the Scripture, we are permitted to reflect on the awesome power of God as He manifested Himself in meeting the needs of people. Think of the display of force shown forth by the parted waters of the Red Sea and the Jordan River, the appearance of water from the rock, of manna from heaven, and of quail from the sea. These are all positive proofs of what God can do when He wants to. We also remember miraculous healings of incurable diseases as His power was unleashed in physical bodies. Finally, we remember the days around Pentecost when the atmosphere was so permeated with God's Spirit that men were healed just by the shadow of the apostles passing by.

As glorious as these examples are, notice the words of Jesus in Luke Ten as the disciples came back rejoicing because,, "Even the devils are subject unto us through Thy Name." He replied..."In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." Surely He is speaking of much more than salvation from hell. He rather tells us of the potential that we have with God. All the provisions of redemption are available to us because of a new relationship. Paul records it like this..."And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together"-Romans 8:17. Power with God means that, as princes, we have access into all the vast resources and riches of God. As we look at the life of Jacob in this chapter, we will note that there are definite steps in obtaining such power by actual experience.

First, he was left alone..."And Jacob was left alone" Gen. 32:24. This is an experience which we cannot escape. It is here that we are absolutely shut up to God. Job had to walk down the same path. It is a time when all our resources come to nought. It is a time when we are convinced that no one understands us, a time when we must be honest and forthright before God, realizing that none but God can supply the right answers. Oftentimes it means the opinions of well-meaning sympathizers are meaningless to us. There must come such a time in our lives when God meets us on an individual basis and we know it. As often as not, these are times of adversity...such as Jonah in the belly of the fish, John on the Isle of Patmos, and Job seated on the ash heap. These times of isolation are of paramount importance, if we are going to achieve power with God.

The next step of progress for Jacob is in verse twenty-five of our chapter... weakness. He was crippled or incapacitated. Jesus spoke of this truth when He said, "Without Me, you can do nothing." Paul tells us. "When I am weak, then am I strong" II Cor. 12:10. Paul also acknowledges this fact by saying, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given" -Eph. 3:8. As men of this world, we really do not understand weakness nor can we understand it until God reveals it to us. Solomon said, "I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all" - Ecc. 9:11. All of these citations reveal God' s principles; but, until we are caught in the quicksand of actual weakness, we cannot appreciate the truth of them. Undoubtedly, Jacob felt some pain as his thigh was out of joint; and we may expect the same if we aspire to obtain the fullness of God' s provisions.

There are many ways of weakness outside of the physical body. Some have experienced a miserable time because of their mistakes, but God has used these mistakes to weaken them. Peter who was so sure of his own strength, asserting his willingness to die for Christ, went out and wept bitterly after he had denied the Lord. Moses, who was so strong in himself as he killed the Egyptian in defense of his Jewish brethren, later came with a catalog of weaknesses. Finally Job, after insisting on many strengths throughout the book, says to God, "Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes" - Job 42:6. All these men including Jacob, were brought to nothingness, that they might know the everlasting strength of God.

The third step in obtaining power with God is - "And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me"- Genesis 32:26. This verse expresses the supreme desire of Jacob for God' s blessing. He was by no means passive about God' s riches, and never had been. Consider for a moment what his desire could have been. He could very easily have cried out for God to heal his thigh. In addition, he could have besought the Lord most vehemently for protection from Esau or even asked for his death. We see, however, in the final analysis the genuine desire of Jacob. He wanted God' s blessings.

It is amazing how fire brings out the true desires of the heart, be they good or bad. In David' s time there were some like Shimei and Ahithophel who turned against their king when the going got rough. Hebrews 11:35 records some worthies of faith who refused deliverance because they had an extreme desire for a better resurrection. Job at times manifest some attributes of the flesh in his answers to his comforters; but his fiery trial also brought out the beautiful attributes of faith in his heart such as "When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" - Job 23:10. So, in the hour when it counted most, Jacob desired God' s blessing above everything, and he was not sent away empty. God placed the crown of a prince upon him as He changed his name from the "supplanter" to "Israel" - "a prince" with God who obtained "power with God and with men, and hast prevailed" - Gen. 32:28. All of his life, Jacob had wanted this. He took advantage of the situation, and bought the birthright from Esau who insisted he was dying. Later, Jacob, along with his mother, connived and deceived Isaac to obtain the blessing; but, wonder of wonders, Jacob received the fullness of his desires here in this very weakened condition alone with God. Like Jacob, the blessings are ours by promise; but we must follow this same path

which he did in order to obtain the experimental fullness of them.

After obtaining power with God, some consideration must be given as to the use of it. Power with God does not mean that we are filled with so much faith that we are able to twist God' s arm and force Him to do things that He had no intention of doing. Power with God does not mean that we may act like spoiled brats and demand anything that we deem important or that simply suits our fancy. As we will see in the following examples, it is rather a matter of being in perfect harmony with God' s Divine plan .... always having the attitude of, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven."

Abraham was such a man as this in Genesis 18:17-33. God revealed His plans, to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, to the patriarch because He knew His man ... "I know him..." and Abraham is in fit spiritual condition for the task. He had already established the basis for fellowship and intercession. His spiritual state is expressed in the first few verses of this chapter as the Lord appeared to him in the plane of Mamre, the place of fatness. Not only so, but he knew how to rest in Christ as "he sat in the tent door." Occupying the tent, Abraham was not one who had reached a foundation of com- placency. He was a pilgrim ready to pick up his tent and move to greater victories and blessings.

The Lord' s appearance "in the heat of the day" is also noteworthy. It signifies not only the fullness of light, but also expresses the fiery trial; and, as we walk with the Lord, we realize more and more the direct relationship between revelations of truth and extreme adversity. Next, we see that Abraham knew how to worship, as he ran to meet his distinguished guests and bowed down before them expressing his desire to prepare a feast for them. Such an invitation was gladly received, and Abraham was not ignorant of their pleasure. The three measures of meal for the cakes, mentioned in verse six, suggest the resurrection life of Christ; while the calf of verse seven is an expression of Calvary, which provides a full and complete redemption forum.

Abraham is ready to exercise power with God, not for some fleshly glory- seeking purpose, but in behalf of others. He is actually doing what God knew he would do. Immediately he appeals to God' s justice ... "Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked." Six times Abraham went boldly to the throne of grace, God finally assuring him that He would not destroy those cities if there were at least ten righteous souls in them. Though Sodom and Gomorrah were overthrown, Abraham' s intercessory power was effectual. The righteous did not perish with the wicked, as God graciously spared Lot in remembrance of Abraham' s intercession.

Elijah is another who showed that he had power with God--- I Kings 18:36-38. Here, in this narrative, Elijah literally called down fire from heaven ... not to show what a mighty miracle-worker he was, but that Israel would know that God was God; for Israel had gone astray after many idols. Outside of speaking judgment through His prophets on various occasions, God had been silent. His wonderful works and wonders had not been manifest, because of such terrible wicked- ness.

Now, however, He desires to make Himself known. The entire test outlined here was designed by God, not Elijah. "Let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel .... and that I have done all these things at Thy Word." This faithful servant dared to believe God

and was not disappointed. Fire fell from heaven consuming not only the sacrifice, but also the wood, stones, dust and water.

After this, Elijah again displayed his power with God by calling on Him to make it rain. In 17:1, he had stated, "There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." This does not mean that Elijah had control of the bottles of heaven, but rather that he was in perfect harmony with God' s Divine plan. James 5:17 tells us that this righteous man "prayed earnestly that it might not rain." He was concerned with God' s desire and intentions, and prayed accordingly.

Immediately after the fire fell from heaven, the children of Israel "fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, He is the God; the Lord, He is the God." Baal' s prophets were slain, and then God opened the windows of heaven. Elijah could exercise power with God, because he had heard the Word of the Lord and knew what He wanted him to do. When we follow His pattern, we need not worry about asking amiss ... James 4:3.

King Hezekiah is another who evidenced power with God..... II Kings 20. Here we are informed that Hezekiah had a terminal illness, but this godly king sought the Lord. In view of some statements made here, we cannot conclude that Hezekiah' s desire for life was of a selfish nature. The good to which he alludes in verse three refers to some giant steps of reformation in Judah recorded in II Kings 18 and II Chronicles 29 - 31.

Godly leaders throughout the books of Kings are an extreme rarity. Hezekiah is one of those who turned the people back to God. Notice the Lord calls him, "The captain of My people" - II Kings 20:5. Surely, this king was thinking of God' s people and not just his own personal need, as he turned his face to the wall and wept before the Lord. God was entreated of him, and added fifteen years to his life. This fifteen year period turned out to be an extension of prosperity for Judah. In exercising power with God, Hezekiah was in agreement with what God wanted and did indeed bring blessing to others.

Finally, Paul exemplifies one who had power with God throughout the book of Acts and in his epistles. Time and time again he bows before the throne of grace in behalf of the saints. He and Silas were delivered from prison as they prayed and sang praises to God. He was delivered from the sea along with his shipmates, because he believed God. Today, such power is available to us. I John 5:15 promises ... "And if we know that He hears us, what- soever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him."

As Jesus said, we are to rejoice because our names are written in Heaven. Our Father is Lord of Heaven and earth, and He will hear us when we cry out to him. He is no less faithful to us than to those we have considered in this message. Let us follow their example. When God emblazons specific names on our hearts, it is His signal to exercise power with God in their behalf. Let us be very sensitive to the direction of God, and exercise this power often. THE END