

“Power With God”

As a prince hast thou power with God. --Genesis 32:28

POWER with God is a sublime attainment: it leads to the possession of every form of power. No wonder that it is added, "and with men" When Jacob had prevailed with God he had no reason to fear Esau. Observe that it is the power of a single individual, exhibited in a time of deep distress: how much more power will be found where two or three agree in prayer! Let us note—

I. WHAT THIS POWER CANNOT BE.

Cannot be physical force. "Hast thou an arm like God?" (Job 40:9).

Cannot be mental energy. "Declare if thou hast understanding" (Job 38:4).

Cannot be magical. Some seem to fancy that prayers are charms, but this is idle. "He maketh diviners mad"(Isa. 44:15). "Use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do" (Matt. 6:7).

Cannot be meritorious. "Is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect?" (Job 22:3). "If thou be righteous, what givest thou him?" (Job 35:7).

Cannot be independent. It must be given by the Lord. "Will he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me" (Job 23:6).

II. WHENCE THIS POWER PROCEEDS.

1. It arises from the Lord's nature: his goodness and tenderness are excited by the sight of our sorrow and weakness. A soldier about to kill a child put aside his weapon when the little one cried out, "Don't kill me, I am so little"

2. It comes out of God's promise. In his covenant, in the gospel, and in the Word, the Lord puts himself under bonds to those who know how to plead his truth and faithfulness." Put me in remembrance; let us plead together" (Isa. 43:26).

3. It springs out of the relationships of grace. A father will surely hear his own children. A friend will be true to his friend. Story of the power of a child in Athens who ruled his mother and through her his father who was the chief magistrate, and so controlled the whole city; love thus made a babe to have power over a prince and his people. The love of God to us is our power with him.

4. It grows out of the Lord's previous acts. His election of his people is a power with him since he is unchanging in his purposes. Redemption, regeneration, calling, communion, are all arguments for our final preservation, for mercy will not forsake that which wisdom has commenced. Each blessing draws on another like links of a chain. Past mercies are the best of pleas for present and future aid.

III. HOW CAN IT BE EXERCISED.

1. There must be a deep sense of weakness, "When I am weak then am I strong" (2 Cor. 12:10).
2. There must be simple faith in the goodness of the Lord. "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also" (John 14:12). Faith is the prevailing grace —
It treads on the world, and on hell;
It vanquishes death and despair:
And, what is still stranger to tell,
It overcomes heaven by prayer.
3. There must be earnest obedience to his will. "If any man doeth his will, him he heareth" (John 9:31).
4. There must be fixed resolve. "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me" (verse 26).
5. With this must be blended importunity. "There wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day" (verse 24).
6. The whole heart must be poured out. "Yea he wept and made supplication" (Hos. 12:4).
7. Increased weakness must not make us cease. Jacob was lame yet he prevailed. "The lame take the prey" (Isa. 33:23).

IV. TO WHAT USE THIS POWER MAY BE TURNED.

1. For ourselves.

For our own deliverance from special trial.
Our honorable preferment. "Thy name shall be called Israel"
Our future comfort, strength, and growth, when, like Jacob, we are called to successive trials.

2. For others.

Jacob's wives and children were preserved, and Esau's heart was softened. If we had more power with God we should have a happier influence among our relatives.

In other instances, Abraham, Job, Moses, Samuel, Paul, etc., exercised power with God for the good of others.

We shall win souls for Jesus by this power. He that has power with God for men will have power with men for God.

O for a holy ambition to possess power with God!
If we have it, let us not lose it, but exercise it continually.
How terrible to have no power with God, but to be fighting
against him with our puny arm!

Notes for Brightening

Jacob, though a man, a single man, a traveling man, a tired man, yea, though a worm, that is easily crushed and trodden under foot, and no man (Isa. 41:14), yet in private prayer he is so potent, that he overcomes the Omnipotent God; he is so mighty, that he overcomes the Almighty. —*Thomas Brooks*

A stern father has been conquered by a tear in the eye of his daughter. An unwilling heart has relented and bestowed an alms at

the sight of the disappointment caused by a refusal. Sorrow constrains to pity. When importunity takes the hand of grief, and the two go together to the gate of mercy, it opens of its own accord. Sincerity, earnestness, perseverance, confidence, and expectancy are all potent instruments of power with God.

How often have I seen a little child throw its arms around its father's neck, and win, by kisses and importunities and tears, what had else been refused. Who has not yielded to importunity, even when a dumb animal looked up in our face with suppliant eyes for food? Is God less pitiful than we? —*Dr. Guthrie*

It were easy here to expatiate into a large history of the great exploits which prayer is renowned for in Holy Writ. This is the key that has opened and again shut heaven. It hath vanquished mighty armies, and unlocked such secrets as passed the skill of the very Devil himself to find out. It hath strangled desperate plots in the very womb wherein they were conceived; and made those engines of cruelty prepared against the saints recoil upon the inventors of them; so that they have inherited the gallows which they did set up for others. At the knock of prayer prison-doors have opened, the grave hath delivered up its dead; and the sea's leviathan, not able to digest his prey, hath been made to vomit it up again. It hath stopped the sun's chariot in the heavens, yea, made it to go back. And that which surpasseth all, it hath taken hold of the Almighty, when on his full march against persons and people, and hath put him to a merciful retreat. — *W. Gurnall*

In a certain town, says the Rev. Mr. Finney, there had been no revival for many years; the church was nearly run out, the youth were all unconverted, and desolation reigned unbroken. There lived in a retired part of the town an aged man, a blacksmith by trade, and of so stammering a tongue that it was painful to hear him speak. On one Friday, as he was at work in his shop alone, his mind became greatly exercised about the state of the church, and of the impenitent. His agony became so great, that he was induced to lay aside his work, lock the shop door, and spend the afternoon in prayer. He prevailed, and on the Sabbath called in the minister and desired him to appoint a conference meeting. After some hesitation, the minister consented, observing, however, that he feared but few would attend. He appointed it the same evening, at a large private house. When evening came, more assembled than could be accommodated in the house. All were silent for a time, until one sinner broke out in tears, and said, if anyone could pray, he begged him to pray for *him*. Another followed, and another, and still another, until it was found that persons from every quarter of the town were under deep convictions. And what was remarkable, was that they all dated their conviction at the hour when the old man was praying in his shop. A powerful revival followed. Then this old stammering man prevailed, and as a prince, had power with God.