

*Celebrating Happy 25th Birthday to me!*

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## GOD'S MIRACLES FOR OUR STRUGGLES

by Jonathan

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### EGO AND PRIDE ASSASSINATION: KEY TO CHARACTER TRANSFORMATION

“And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hallow of his thigh; and the hallow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What *is* thy name? And he said, Jacob. 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. And Jacob asked *him*, and said, Tell *me*, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore *is* it *that* thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Pen’-i-el: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. And as he passed over Pen-u’-el the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh. Therefore the children of Israel eat not *of* the sinew which shrank, which *is* upon the hallow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hallow of Jacob’s thigh in the sinew that shrank” (Genesis 32:24-32).

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This Christian experience is not without difficulties and disturbances. I have faced times of restlessness and struggles where were it not for the grace of God, I would have given up the faith.

True communion with God demands that we be sick and tired of prayers as though they were pious but powerless. Rules that are ritualistic but devoid of relationship. Unfortunately, much of what passes as Christianity is going through the mechanics and motions of religiosity but so little truth and reality.

Contrary to popular opinion, Christianity is not for wimps. It is aggressive and militant. Not against people or “flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*” (Ephesians 6:12). We do not find our solutions through holding political demonstrations or staging socio-cultural revolutions. Instead, we are to earnestly engaged in seeking God’s face humbly and yet boldly (read 2 Chronicles 7:14).

If there was a man who knew the cost of taking hold of God in prevailing prayer, Jacob was such a man. Though he was a “Supplanter” or “Deceiver”, his stirring importunity in contending and striving with God transformed him into Israel, which can mean “Prince

with God". Even though he by stealth receives Esau's birthright and blessing (read Genesis 27:36), his acknowledgement of character impotence and weakness touched the God of mercy and grace. It took a willingness to experience painful ego and pride assassination that led to his character transformation. In face of difficulty and discouragement, his faith stood steadfast on the promise of God's blessings, "And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude" (Genesis 32:12).

When we gave our lives to the Lord Jesus Christ, we received not only the miracle of the new birth (read 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 6:15, Ephesians 2:15, 4:24 and Colossians 3:10) but also a wealth of "...exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). As "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Colossians 1:12), we were "sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession..." (Ephesians 1:13-14). As the Word and promises of God must be received through dependency on the Holy Spirit, it is not the amount of wisdom we have that makes Bible study alive and intimate, but the measure of the anointing that we thirst after that we can be aflame in the fullness of Christ's joy and power, "For all the promises of God in him *are* yea, and in him A'-men, unto the glory of God by us. Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, *is* God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Corinthians 1:20-22).

### **OUR AVAILABILITY IS HIS POSSIBILITY, OUR STRUGGLES BECOME HIS OPPORTUNITIES FOR MIRACLES!**

"And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men *it is* impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible" (Mark 10:27).

"I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Romans 8:37).

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of* God" (Romans 8:26-27).

"What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also" (1 Corinthians 14:15).

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Ephesians 6:18).

“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost” (Jude 20).

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I do not know where I will be without the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. There is so much antagonism and hostility of the world’s system to endure in addition to the internal struggle within my own life where “I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Romans 7:23-24). I do not want to sound defeated or despairing. But what it does mean is that while knowledge of the Law and the Scriptures (which is spiritual, according to Romans 7:14) can enlighten my conscience by exposing sin and revealing what is right, it is powerless in itself to produce the fruits of holiness and righteousness in me. For example, I lament that I still have difficulties with fear and pride (perhaps, not in terms of natural abilities, but in the sense that I live as if I am not human) on occasions.

There is still a conflict which goes on between the new nature and the old. But Jesus has not left me comfortless. When I was struggling and despairing of deliverance, I have seen how the power of the Holy Spirit has brought me through. I have experienced how His presence lifted the load of fear and distress, “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).

When Jesus said, “...in the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33), He wants us to experience the “peace I (He) leave with you, my (His) peace I (He) give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I (He) unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). Most of us do not enjoy adversity, affliction, anguish, crushing distress or pressure, but many times, we have to be brought down to our knees before we come to our senses that as “...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). Identification with His glory and victory does not promised us a life free from pain, but it guarantees us that the Holy Spirit is the foretaste of the pledge that we are God’s children as we cry, Abba, Father (read Romans 8:15-16, 8:23, Ephesians 1:14).

We are living in the age of the Holy Spirit, as a fulfilment of Jesus’ promise of another Comforter (also signifies advocate, counselor, helper and intercessor) in John 14:16-17, “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; *Even* the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it

seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you”.

The Holy Spirit, being the third Person of the Godhead, continues the ministry of the resurrected Christ as if Jesus was physically present with us, “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, *even* the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning” (John 15:26-27).

As the High Priest and King, Christ’s ministrations include being able also to “save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25). Just as the prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane was characterized by “strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared” (Hebrews 5:7), I believe submission to God’s will with godly fear is a bittersweet experience. When and where there are certain expressions of our hearts and spirits that cannot be put to words, the Holy Spirit actually takes part with us and make our weak prayers into effectual intercession before the throne of God. This may be accompanied by sighs and groans, which imply a certain degree of anguish. In our wrestling with God, when we are being served with cups of pain, we have to endure “the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:7). It will be a time “of whom I (we) travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you (us)” (Galatians 4:19).

### **THERE IS A RIVER**

“*There is* a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy *place* of the tabernacles of the most High” (Psalm 46:4).

“They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures” (Psalm 36:8).

“Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, *which* is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness. They drop *upon* the pastures of the wilderness: and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing” (Psalm 65:9-13).

“Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, *and* rivers in the desert. The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, *and* rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen. This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise” (Isaiah 43:19-21).

(I also encourage you to read Ezekiel 47:1-12).

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In the midst of trouble, I want the river of God. I am learning to rest and yield in the overflowing refreshing of the Holy Spirit, “He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7:38).

I believe God is restoring the tabernacle of David as we enter into a more intimate level of rejoicing, thanksgiving, praise and worship. With the fresh visitation of the Holy Spirit, the power and the touch of God can cause expressions such as falling (Acts 9:4, Revelation 1:17), rejoicing (Psalm 126:2, Ecclesiastes 3:4), shaking (Psalm 99:1, Jeremiah 23:9) and weeping (Nehemiah 8:9) to take place. Whatever the outward manifestations, the demonstration of repentance, the fruit of the Spirit, hunger for the Word, passion for Jesus and concern for evangelism should be present in order to legitimize these experiences as of God.

Even though we are not immune to life’s struggles, we should apply and walk under the blood of Jesus Christ. As we do, we will see despair giving way to declaration of victory, “...weeping may endure for a night, but joy *cometh* in the morning” (Psalm 30:5) and “...Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. A’-men” (Revelation 1:5-6). Hallelujah!

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