Wrestling With God BY Malusi Skunyana

Read Genesis 32:24-30

GEN 32:24. And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

GEN 32:25 And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.

GEN 32:26 And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

GEN 32:27 And he said unto him, What [is] thy name? And he said, Jacob.

GEN 32:28 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.

GEN 32:29 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.

GEN 32:30 And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

When things in our lives come to a standstill, and nothing is going right, the best course of action is to turn to God in prayer. Jacob’s wrestling with God teaches us that battles are only won when we are on our knees, communing with God, presenting our difficulties before Him. When things fall apart, when the waves of life seem to overflow us, we may wrestle with God in prayer, pleading for His intervention. In all our conflicts and afflictions, it is best to put our trust in the Almighty God.

In Genesis 32, we find Jacob facing the greatest struggle of his life, as he fears an inescapable encounter with his brother Esau, whom Jacob had wronged. Jacob had fled for his life, terrified by his brother’s deadly threats, after Jacob had deceived their father and stole Esau’s blessing. After remaining an exile for 20 years, Jacob was commanded by God to return to his native country. As Jacob travelled with his family and all that they had, “the angels of God met him.” Genesis 32:1. No doubt, these angels were sent to assure him that God would be with him all the way. But still, Jacob wanted to do all he could to make peace with Esau. So he sent messengers with a conciliatory message for his brother. Jacob wished his brother would forgive his wrong. But the messengers returned to him with no message other than that Esau was coming with four hundred men to meet Jacob. At this point Jacob was terrified, he thought his brother was coming to make war with him. So he divided his company in two groups; his family, servants, flocks, herds and camels; everything was divided in two groups. He thought if Esau attacked the first group, then the other might have an opportunity to escape. Jacob then pleaded with the Lord to deliver him from the hand of his brother.

When they reached the river Jabbok and night fell on them, Jacob sent his family across the river and he remained behind, most probably he wanted to engage in prayer through the night. Then there wrestled a man with him until daybreak. The immediate context of the text suggests that Jacob was wrestling with more than just a “man.” The dislocation of Jacob’s thigh, the blessing, the words “you have wrestled with God”, and Jacob’s statement “I have seen God face to face”; these all suggest that he wrestled with God, and since God had already decided to adopt humanity in the person of Jesus Christ, it is safe to conclude that Jacob wrestled with the Son of God. The Son of God, who later also appeared in Babylon when the three Hebrew boys were thrown by Nebuchadnezzar in the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:24, 25), intervened in this trying time in the life of Jacob. But before He could solve Jacob’s problem, his angry brother Esau, He had to deal with Jacob and break him, so that he came out of that encounter not as Jacob the deceiver, but Israel the prince of God. What an amazing and life-changing encounter with God!

When Jacob finally met Esau, it seemed a change had taken over Esau too, because instead of hurting his brother, “Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.” Genesis 33:4. What a touching scene was this! Jacob’s unique encounter with the Son of God resulted in a happy reunion with his brother instead of war and bloodshed. The experience of Jacob teaches us how vain is the help of man, and how useless is all trust in human power. Our only help has to come from God, who is able to fight and win all our battles. Victory over our spiritual battles means victory over our physical battles as well; and these battles are won not on our feet, but on our knees. When the crisis had come in his life, and everything was at stake, Jacob realized that he needed a higher power to carry him through. When his human power and wisdom were not sufficient to avert the crisis in his life, he wrestled with God and would not let go.

Dear friend, when faced with crisis, we need to put our trust in God. Only when we wrestle with God in prayer can we be assured of victory over all our battles. We can do nothing of ourselves; in our unworthiness, we must trust in the merits of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. The greatest battle we have to fight is the battle with self. Before we can have victory over our external battles, we need to fall on Jesus the Rock of Ages, and let Him deal with our inner selves, then we will have victory over other battles. I pray that you may place your life in the hands of Jesus, and let Him deal with all that concerns you. God bless you! Amen!