

Finding the Place of Power

Recently I received this question from an old friend, Randy Brown, “Bro. Johnny! Didn't you pray in an old railroad car while in Hyles-Anderson? If that is not accurate, where did you pray? Wasn't there something peculiar about it? Wasn't it early in the morning? Give me some facts. Thank you, sir!” This is my answer I sent him, “The answer is Yes! I did pray often in an old railroad car, just off the campus of Hyles-Anderson College. It was especially taken note of during the time that Barbara had broken up with me. Some of my friends heard me praying in there -- and after having received the victory answer to that prayer, i.e. receiving the hand of this fair damsel (Barbara), they christened this old Pennsylvania railroad car (to my embarrassment) "The Pennsylvania Powerhouse." One of the reasons it morphed into "Fundamentalist Mythology" is because later, many a young man went into that same railroad car to pray for his wife and after many more successful answers to prayer -- well you can see how the story bloomed.”

I am sure that many whose eyes fall upon these lines can take us back to a precious place where God met with you. David talked about it when he said, *“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty”* (Psalm 91:1). The passage of Scripture that came to my mind after receiving the question from Randy Brown was Genesis 32: 24-28: *“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 hollow of his thigh; and the hollow 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”* (Genesis 32: 24-28). Why do we all need to find that place where power with God and man can be obtained?

1. To acknowledge our dependence on God for everything.

One of life’s strongest temptations is often our most defended; it is the temptation to pridefully seek to work our way through our life and the struggles contained therein by our own strength. To many a red-blooded man, this is the American way. A film that made a lasting impression on me in my youth was Shenadoah filmed in 1965. At the beginning of the story, we find the protagonist, Charlie Anderson played by Jimmy Stewart, opening up with the words of this prayer: “Lord, we cleared this land. We plowed it, sowed it, and harvested it. We cooked the harvest. It wouldn’t be here and we wouldn’t be eating it if we hadn’t done it all ourselves. We worked dog-bone hard for every crumb and morsel, but we thank you, Lord, just the same for the food we’re about to eat. Amen.” This is often the attitude of many hard working men. However, at the end of the movie, the writer got it right. The closing scene begins with Charlie talking to his

deceased wife by her graveside, with three freshly dug graves of two of their sons and one daughter-in-law. Charlie says these words, "I don't even know what to say to you any more, Martha. There's not much I can tell you about this war. It's like all wars, I guess. The undertakers are winning; and the politicians talk about the glory of it; and the old men talk about the need of it. And the soldiers, well, they just want to go home. I guess you're not so lonely any more, with Ann and James and Jacob -- and maybe the boy." His graveside chat is interrupted by the church bells and he says, "You never give up, do you?" This statement reflecting her desire while in life to try to get him into church. He then goes to church with his remaining family and the church service is temporarily interrupted by the entrance of his lost-at-war youngest son who enters, to everyone's surprise, hobbling on a crutch. Charlie embraces him and together he, the boy and the entire congregation sing together the Doxology which begins with these words, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." What a contrast! The story begins with, "Lord, we did it all" and ends with "Lord, you are praised because you did it all."

Great things happen when we acknowledge God's sovereignty over our life! Jacob had to come to the end of himself and see God as the Source for his life before the power came. "...*Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men...*" (Genesis 32:28). Jacob means "twisted or crooked" whereas Israel contextually means "Prince of or with God." The Bible declares in Romans 5:17, that we "...*shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.*" We, too, shall discover that we are ruling over life rather than life ruling over us, when we find the place of power.

2. To receive specific miracle answers to prayer.

"The Pennsylvania Powerhouse" was not magical, mystical or some kind of spiritual Never-land that housed a miracle in its physical properties. I could have just as easily found that secret place in the woods or an empty room. What makes the place of power a powerful place is not the place, but the Person whom we meet there. In the song, "A Child of the King," Francis Mosher wrote, "A tent or a cottage, why should I care?" Mosher was telling us our true home is in Heaven with the Lord, so wherever we are here on earth is really inconsequential. John Newton eloquently wrote of this in his hymn from the 1700s, "The midsummer sun shines but dim, The fields strive in vain to look gay; But when I am happy in Him, December's as pleasant as May."

When the prayer place becomes the power place, miracles happen and a cottage becomes a castle; December's cold gives way to May's warmth! In the Word of God, we see our Lord is ever encouraging us to venture out in faith with the simple trust of a Peter when walking on the water.

Once on a tour through England the guide pointed to the high pulpit where the guide informed, "Up yonder is where John Wesley is said to have preached under the power of the Holy Spirit." After the guide led the tour on, it was noticed the old black minister was missing. Someone remarked the last time they had seen him, he was still in the church. When a person was sent back to retrieve him, he found the old man of God had climbed into the pulpit and there

fell on his knees at the very place where John Wesley preached. The old preacher was heard praying, "Lord, do it again! Oh Lord, do it again!"

Do you need a miracle? If the answer is "Yes!" then let me encourage you to find a place, any place where you can find privacy to hear only the voice of God and claim verses such as "*Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full*" (John 16:24). "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matthew 7:7). Just this morning, I was talking to one of our church members who had received a specific miracle answer to prayer. He could not explain how this happened, but when he informed me of the outcome, in my heart I saw clearly that God honors the sincere prayer in the secret place which is the birthing place of miracles.

3. To bring ultimate glory to God.

The Bible says, "*Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD*" (Jeremiah 9:23, 24). This is emphasized again in I Corinthians 1:29, "*That no flesh should glory in his presence.*"

Jacob left the place of power having received a loving wound from the Lord illustrating to the world it was not his power, but God's power that won the day. The Bible says, "*And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face...*" (Genesis 32:30). So Jacob could only glory in the fact that he had come to know the Lord his God intimately! God's goal in our finding the power place is to get to know Him and ultimately bring glory to Him who alone is worthy of our highest praise!

-Pastor Pope-