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Mighty Prevailing Prayer: Experiencing the Power of Answered Prayer

35. Holy Wrestlers

This chapter explores 'wrestling prayer' — praying with holy intensity that lays hold of God and refuses to let go. It asks whether God Himself sometimes resists us in prayer to deepen our dependence, then surveys men and women through history whose wrestling in prayer changed lives, movements, and nations.

Key takeaways

- Our main resistance in prayer is Satan, but God may also resist us at times — either until we make things right, or for His own sovereign purpose — so that we press in and grow more dependent on Him.
- Wrestling prayer is 'taking hold of God' — seizing His hand and refusing to let go, like grasping the horns of the altar for mercy.
- We are invited to come to God boldly and fearlessly; holy vehemence in prayer is precious to Him, not irreverent.
- In this wrestling God is really fighting the powers of darkness through us, training us to defeat Satan and set captives free.

- History is full of holy wrestlers: Monica (Augustine's mother), Luther, Knox, Finney, Madam Guyon, Catherine Booth, and many who shaped the Reformation and later revivals.
- Charles Finney's day-long prayer agony aboard ship in 1834 led to his revival writings and, directly and indirectly, millions coming to Christ.

Passages worth keeping

“God may actually resist us when we pray in order that we in turn may resist and overcome His resistance and so be led to deeper dependence on Him.”

Packer's summary of the chapter's central, controversial idea.

“My whole soul wrestled with God... just at night, the subject cleared up to my mind.”

Finney's testimony of prevailing prayer that transformed his ministry.

How it connects

The chapter roots this bold, agonizing prayer in Jacob at Peniel, who would not let go until he was blessed — presenting that struggle as the pattern for every believer who prevails with God.

Scripture referenced

- **Genesis 32 (Jacob's wrestling)** -- the model of wrestling with God

- **Isaiah 27:5** -- 'Let them take hold of me' — laying hold of God
- **Isaiah 64:7** -- no one strives to lay hold of God
- **Hebrews 4:16** -- coming boldly to the throne of grace