

A DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

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# Wrestling in Prayer

*Part Two: The Arena and the Athletes*

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Genesis 32:24–26 • Exodus 32:32 • Daniel 10:12–13 • Luke 22:44

*A devotional reflection on the awakening at the intersection of  
The Opponents We Face • The Examples We Follow • The Revival We Seek*

***“I will not let you go unless you bless me.”***

— Genesis 32:26

## Entering the Arena

In Part One, we established the theological foundation: wrestling in prayer is intense spiritual labor, other-centered, persistent, goal-oriented—and powered not by human willpower but by God’s energy at work within the intercessor (Colossians 1:29; 4:12).

Now we ask the questions that move from theology to practice: What does the wrestler contend against? Who has modeled this kind of prayer? And what does it look like when wrestling prayer meets the call to revival?

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## What the Wrestler Contends Against

### The External Opposition

Wrestling requires an opponent. The New Testament is explicit that intercessory prayer operates within a contested spiritual landscape. Paul identifies the real adversaries:

*“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” — Ephesians 6:12*

Daniel’s experience in chapters 9–10 provides the most vivid illustration. He prayed and fasted for three weeks. An angelic messenger finally arrived and explained the delay: “The prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days” (Daniel 10:13). Daniel’s prayer was heard on the first day. The answer was dispatched immediately. But the answer had to fight through spiritual opposition to reach him.

This means wrestling prayer is not overcoming God’s reluctance. God answered on day one. The wrestling is against the forces that resist the delivery of what God has already decided to give. The intercessor stands on God’s side of the battlefield, fighting alongside Him against everything that opposes His will.

## The Internal Opponents

But the opposition is not only external and demonic. The wrestler also contends against enemies within:

**Sin** — Unconfessed sin breaks the connection. “If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened” (Psalm 66:18). Prayer always struggles with sin—past sin that produces guilt and present sin that produces distance. The wrestler must deal honestly with his own condition before he can effectively intercede for others.

**Distraction** — The wandering mind, the buzzing phone, the urgent to-do list. In the context of spiritual warfare, these are not neutral interruptions. They are tactical disruptions. Every notification that pulls you from intercession is a small victory for the opposition. The wrestler must choose focus over fragmentation.

**Discouragement** — The temptation to quit when answers seem delayed. Daniel prayed three weeks before the answer arrived. Abraham waited decades for the promised son. The gap between prayer and visible result is where most intercessors surrender. The wrestler refuses to interpret delay as denial.

**The Pressure of Good Work** — This may be the subtlest opponent of all. We feel we have so much good work to do—legitimate, kingdom-serving, productive work—that the pressure to finish it keeps us from prayer. Martha was not doing bad work. She was doing good work. But Jesus said Mary had chosen the better thing (Luke 10:41–42). The wrestler recognizes that the most productive thing he can do is the thing that looks least productive to the watching world.

## The Key Principle That Changes Everything

***Prayer is not overcoming God’s reluctance, but laying hold of God’s willingness.***

This changes the nature of the struggle entirely. The wrestler is not fighting against God to change His mind. He is fighting against everything—sin, distraction, discouragement, spiritual opposition, worldly pressure—that prevents him from fully apprehending what God is already willing to give.

Jacob’s wrestling illustrates this. He was not fighting to defeat God. He was clinging to God—refusing to let go until the blessing came. The blessing was not extracted by force. It was released to a man whose desperation proved he valued it enough to endure the fight. God was willing all along. Jacob had to become willing to pay the cost of receiving.

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## The Biblical Gallery: Five Wrestlers

### Jacob at Peniel — The Man Who Would Not Let Go

*“So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of his hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled... Then the man said, ‘Let me go, for it is daybreak.’ But Jacob replied, ‘I will not let you go unless you bless me.’” — Genesis 32:24–26*

Jacob wrestled all night—and walked with a limp for the rest of his life. The blessing came, but it came with a wound. This is the cost of wrestling prayer: you do not leave the encounter unchanged. The limp is not a punishment. It is a permanent reminder that you have been in the presence of God, that you refused to release Him, and that He marked you in the encounter.

Every serious intercessor carries a limp of some kind—a depth, a gravity, a holy weariness that marks those who have grappled with God and refused to let go.

### Abraham at Sodom — The Man Who Bargained with God

*“Then Abraham approached him and said: ‘Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What if there are fifty righteous people in the city?’” — Genesis 18:23–24*

Abraham’s intercession for Sodom is the prototype of persistent, specific, escalating prayer. He began at fifty and negotiated to ten—each step a deeper engagement with God’s justice and mercy. He did not storm heaven with demands. He approached with reverence—“Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes” (18:27)—but he refused to stop asking.

Boldness and humility are not opposites in wrestling prayer. They are partners.

### Moses at Sinai — The Man Who Staked Everything

*“But now, please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written.” — Exodus 32:32*

After the golden calf, God offered to destroy Israel and make a new nation from Moses. Moses refused the offer—and then raised the stakes to the ultimate level: his own name in the book of life. This is intercessory wrestling at its most extreme. Moses identified so completely with the people he was praying for that he was willing to share their fate.

This is the costliest form of intercession—the kind that says, “If they go down, I go down with them.” It is the shadow of what Christ would do definitively on the cross.

## Daniel at the Window — The Man Who Would Not Stop

Daniel prayed three times daily with his windows open toward Jerusalem—even when a law was enacted making it a capital offense (Daniel 6:10). His wrestling was not a single dramatic night. It was a lifetime of habitual, disciplined, dangerous faithfulness.

And when he gave himself to three weeks of intensive fasting and prayer (Daniel 9–10), the heavenly response revealed that his prayers had triggered spiritual warfare at the highest levels of the unseen realm. The angel’s message was stunning: “Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard” (Daniel 10:12). Heard on day one. Delivered on day twenty-one. The three weeks of wrestling were not wasted—they were the battlefield.

Daniel’s example answers the question: What does “always wrestling” look like in practice? It looks like daily faithfulness that does not adjust its rhythm to the political climate, the cultural pressure, or the personal cost.

## Jesus at Gethsemane — The Ultimate Wrestler

*“Being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.” — Luke 22:44*

Luke, the physician, uses *agōnia*—the noun form of the same word Paul applies to Epaphras. Jesus’ prayer was the supreme instance of wrestling: the sinless Son of God contending with the full weight of the world’s sin, the horror of separation from the Father, and the reality of the cross—and choosing to submit.

*“Not my will, but yours be done.” — Luke 22:42*

This is the prayer that holds all other wrestling prayers together. Every intercessor who has ever agonized in prayer has been participating, however dimly, in the kind of costly surrender that Jesus demonstrated fully. He wrestled and submitted. He agonized and obeyed. He sweat blood and said yes.

This is what wrestling prayer ultimately looks like: not getting God to do what we want, but becoming the kind of people who want what God is already doing—no matter the cost.

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## The Core Thesis

Here is the full truth this two-part awakening reveals:

***Wrestling in prayer is not the effort to overcome God's reluctance. It is the costly, Spirit-empowered labor of laying hold of what God is already willing to give—contending against sin, distraction, discouragement, and spiritual opposition until His purposes break through into the visible world.***

This kind of prayer costs something. It costs time—the sustained, focused, undistracted hours that our culture refuses to surrender. It costs emotional energy—the tears, the groaning, the burden-bearing that cannot be faked. It costs comfort—the willingness to kneel when you would rather sleep, to persist when you would rather quit, to carry someone else's spiritual weight on your shoulders.

But it is the kind of intercession that changes people, churches, and nations for the glory of God. Every revival in history was preceded by people who wrestled in prayer until the breakthrough came.

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## Connections to the Revival Journey

### Week 1 — Urgency and Dependence

Wrestling prayer is where urgency and dependence become inseparable. The wrestler works with maximum exertion (urgency) while drawing entirely on God's energy at work within him (dependence). Colossians 1:29 holds both together: "For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me." Revival prayer is neither passive waiting nor self-generated striving. It is the agōn of cooperating with God's power.

*"Work for Revival like it all depends on you; Pray for Revival like it all depends on God."*

### Week 2 — Repentance

Sin is the first opponent the wrestler faces. Daniel's great intercessory prayer in chapter 9 began with comprehensive confession—not of others' sin, but of "our" sin: "We have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled" (Daniel 9:5). The wrestler who would intercede for revival must first deal honestly with the condition of his own heart. Repentance clears the ground for intercession.

### Week 3 — Supernatural Prayer

Colossians 4:12 is a Week 3 text at its core. Epaphras' wrestling was the lived expression of supernatural prayer—sustained, Spirit-empowered, goal-oriented intercession for the spiritual maturity of others. The key insight is that the energy source is divine, not human. "All his energy that he powerfully works within me" means the intercessor is not generating the power; he is channeling it. The Holy Spirit is the active agent, and the human intercessor is the willing vessel.

### Week 4 — Evangelism with Brokenhearted Boldness

Moses' willingness to be blotted from the book, Paul's "unceasing anguish" for his kinsmen (Romans 9:2), and Abraham's refusal to stop interceding for Sodom—these are the prayer foundations of brokenhearted boldness. The evangelist who has not first wrestled in prayer for the lost will lack both the compassion and the courage that gospel proclamation requires. Boldness in the street is born on the knees.

## Week 5 — Generational Transmission

Epaphras was wrestling for the maturity of the next generation of believers in Colossae. Job rose early every morning to offer sacrifices for his children (Job 1:5). The generational dimension of wrestling prayer is this: the older generation bears the cost of intercession for a younger generation that does not yet know how to bear it for themselves. This is the invisible, uncelebrated labor that sustains revival across generations—parents, grandparents, mentors, and elders on their knees, wrestling for people who may never know the price that was paid.

## Week 6 — Sustained Movement

The word “always” in Colossians 4:12 is the key to sustained revival. Epaphras was not a man of dramatic prayer moments. He was a man of habitual prayer discipline. Daniel did not fast for three weeks on impulse; it grew from a lifetime of three-times-daily faithfulness. The sustained movement that the revival curriculum envisions—decades, not days—requires people who will wrestle not once but always. The athlete who trains once does not win. The wrestler who shows up daily does.

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## The Question That Matters Most

If wrestling in prayer is laying hold of God’s willingness—not overcoming His reluctance—then the question is not whether God is ready to act. He is. The question is whether we are willing to pay the cost of receiving what He has already decided to give.

### *What are you willing to wrestle for?*

Is there a person whose salvation you will not stop praying for? A church whose maturity you will intercede for until the breakthrough comes? A generation you will cover in prayer even when they do not ask? A city, a nation, a movement that you will carry before God’s throne with the persistence of Abraham, the identification of Moses, the discipline of Daniel, and the costly surrender of Christ?

Wrestling prayer is not for everyone. Not because God excludes anyone, but because most will not pay the price. It costs time, tears, focus, and the willingness to engage in a battle most people cannot see. But for those who will enter the arena—who will get on their knees and say, “I will not let You go unless You bless them”—the promise stands:

*“The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.” — James 5:16*

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## A Prayer from the Awakening

*Father,*

*We have seen the arena. We have seen the athletes who entered it before us. We have no excuse left for spectating.*

*Give us the persistence of Jacob, who would not release You until the blessing came. Give us the boldness of Abraham, who dared to negotiate with the Almighty while confessing he was dust. Give us the identification of Moses, who would rather be blotted out than see Your people destroyed. Give us the discipline of Daniel, who prayed with his windows open when the cost was his life. Give us the costly surrender of Christ, who wrestled in blood and said, “Not my will, but Yours.”*

*Strip away the opponents within us—the unconfessed sin, the digital noise, the discouragement that whispers “quit,” the tyranny of good work that crowds out the best work. Clear the arena so that we can fight the fight that matters.*

***And do not let us stop until the breakthrough comes.***

*In the name of Christ, the ultimate Wrestler who agonized and obeyed,*

***Amen.***

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## Scripture Treasury — Part Two

*Foundational texts on the practice of wrestling prayer*

### **The Opponents: What the Wrestler Contends Against**

*Ephesians 6:12 — “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”*

*Psalms 66:18 — “If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.”*

*Daniel 10:12–13 — “Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard... But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days.”*

*Luke 10:41–42 — “Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one.”*

### **The Wrestlers: Biblical Examples of Costly Intercession**

*Genesis 32:26 — “I will not let you go unless you bless me.”*

*Genesis 18:27 — “Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes.”*

*Exodus 32:32 — “But now, please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written.”*

*Daniel 9:3–5 — “So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed: ‘We have sinned and done wrong.’”*

*Luke 22:42, 44 — “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done... Being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood.”*

### **The Intercession: Standing in the Gap**

*Romans 9:2–3 — “I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people.”*

*Ezekiel 22:30 — “I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found no one.”*

*1 Timothy 2:1 — “I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people.”*

### **The Promise: Wrestling Prayer Produces Results**

*James 5:16–18 — “The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain.”*

*Hebrews 4:16 — “Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”*

*1 John 5:14–15 — “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.”*

*Jeremiah 29:12–13 — “Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”*