

Philippians (4)

The Power for Living

Thus far in our meditations of Paul's letter to the Philippians, we have considered, *The Purpose for Living*, *The Pattern for Living* and *The Price for Living*. In this present and last article, we will consider *The Power for Living*.

As the apostle thought upon the things that he had experienced for the sake of the gospel, learning to be content whatever the circumstances might be, he acknowledged that his ability to cope in these situations was not because of his own inner strength. He said, *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"* (Phil. 4:13).

While we seek to make the Lord Jesus Christ the object and aim of our lives and desire to be conformed to His image, we must recognize that we cannot accomplish any of this in our own strength. The Lord Jesus said, *"without me ye can do nothing"* (Jn. 15:5). Our blessed Lord, Himself, was the perfect example of dependence upon His heavenly Father.

He said, *"The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise"* (Jn. 5:19); and again, *"I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me"* (Jn. 5:30).

King Asa acknowledged his dependence upon the Lord. His prayer is recorded in the sacred Scriptures for us, *"Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee."* (2nd Chron. 14:11)

King Jehoshaphat also understood that Israel could not prevail against their enemies on their own strength, but must rely on the Lord. He prayed, *"for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee."* (2nd Chron. 20:12).

After Israel witnessed the great work that the Lord did in defeating their enemies in the Red Sea, they sang, *"The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God"* (Ex. 15:2). Throughout the book of the Psalms, we are reminded of our dependence upon the Lord alone for every circumstance of life. David wrote, *"The Lord is the strength of my life"* (Ps. 27:1). On another occasion, he wrote, *"The Lord is my strength and my shield"* (Ps. 28:7). In those psalms that are referred to as the Hallel, the writer declared, *"The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my salvation"* (Ps. 118:14).

Paul encouraged the believers at Philippi, *"work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"*. This was not to suggest that they could work to obtain their salvation, but rather, as the Amplified Bible renders it, *"cultivate it, bring it to full effect, actively pursue spiritual maturity"*. Then he reminded them of this most important principle, *"for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure"* (Phil. 2:12-13).

We all understand as Job expressed to the Lord, *"I know that thou canst do every thing"* (Job 42:2), or as Jeremiah said to the Lord, *"there is nothing too hard for thee"* (Jer. 32:17). But, did you know, dear child of God, that God is doing a great work in us? We love to quote the words of the apostle Paul, from his letter to the saints at Ephesus, *"now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us"* (Eph. 3:20).

What Paul is actually referring to in that verse is God's mighty power working in us to root us and ground us in faith and to bring us into a greater knowledge and appreciation of the love of Christ, so that we might be filled with all the fulness of God. Anything that we accomplish for God can only be accomplished by the power of God working in us.

What Paul expressed to the believers at Corinth is true for believers today, “*there are many adversaries*” (1st Cor. 16:9). In his second letter to Timothy, Paul referred to Alexander the coppersmith, who did him much evil. Rather than plot revenge, the apostle said, “*the Lord reward him according to his works*” (2nd Tim. 4:14).

Even in enduring physical infirmities, Paul learned that God’s grace alone was sufficient for him. He expressed that he would glory in those infirmities, that the power of Christ might rest upon him, or, as other translations suggest, might work through him or dwell in him. Literally, the verse could read be read as, “*that thy strength may spread as a tabernacle over me*” (2nd Cor. 12:9).

In his letter to the believers at Ephesus, Paul warned of the spiritual battles that we face every day against, “*principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places*”. He advised to take the whole armour of God as our defense, so that we may be able to stand against the enemy. He counselled, “*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*”. (Eph. 6:10-18).

*All the service that I render,
Is through Christ who strengthens me;
Aided by His love so tender,
Let me serve Him willingly.*

*Daily in His strength confiding,
As I journey, here, below;
Every need His grace providing,
No want shall I ever know.*

*Upheld by His grace sustaining,
All my labour gladly give;
With my every strength remaining;
Since He died that I might live.*

*With my lot to be contented,
Be my highest earthly aim;
Knowing I have represented
Christ the Saviour’s worthy Name*

*Soon amidst the glories shining,
I shall with the Saviour be;
Ever on His breast reclining,
Throughout all eternity.*

Bernie Payne