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Power For Life

“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” Philippians 4:13

Intro

The Lord told us that in this life we will have pressure. *“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” John 16:33* The word *tribulation* is θλιψιν, which translates out as pressure in the English.

What he is saying is that the world system, as it is presided over by the devil, creates a condition of continual pressure on all believers in Christ. And as we know, if the pressure of the world is not kept out of the soul, then it becomes **stress in the soul**, with all sorts of soul sins and other damaging concepts.

In John 14:27 he tells us that his peace is the solution for this problem, *“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”* The word for *troubled* here is *ταρασσεσθω*, *tarasso*, which speaks of an inner agitation of the soul, or what we call stress. Which leads to the condition of **fear** in the soul and the **anger** that follows fear.

In life the believer in Christ will have to go through many trials, sufferings and ordeals before they reach the kingdom of God in heaven. Some of them are of crisis proportions and indeed painful; the death of those you love, your own death, sickness, injuries, divorces, crushing disappointments, setbacks, financial difficulties, rejection, hurt, persecution, just to name a few.

So the big question is, how can we go through all these things and not be destroyed by them? And has God provided a spiritual solution so that we can come through these fiery trials **victorious**? And the answer is yes; we can go through these things victorious and not be destroyed, and the answer is found in the Word.

In John 14:16,17 the Lord is instructing his disciples that he is going to send to them the Comforter, whom we know is the Holy Spirit, who will indwell his people permanently and eternally. *“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever: Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”* (We also want to note that the Holy Spirit is identified with truth, with Bible Doctrine as the Spirit of Truth).

We see that it is the peace of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit that keeps the pressure of the world outside the soul, so that stress does not accumulate in the soul, with the result that we end up in fear, anxiety, worry and apprehension.

A. I learned the secret

“I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.”

Philippians 4:12 οἶδα και ταπεινουσθαι οἶδα και περισσευειν εν παντι και εν πασιν μεμνημαι και χορταζεσθαι και πειναν και περισσευειν και υστερεισθαι

The word for *know* here is *oida*, οἶδα. In the Greek there are several words for knowledge. *Gnosis* looks at the idea of academic facts. *Ginosko* looks at that process of gaining knowledge on a subject over a period of time. *Epignosis* looks at the Bible Doctrine that we have learned and believed. *Oida* brings out the emphasis that one has a full and complete understanding of a particular subject. And *sophia* refers to the learned and believed Doctrine that we have in our soul that is applied to life.

So on this subject the Apostle Paul is talking about, he has come to the place where he has a complete understanding of it. To be full and to be hungry, to abound and suffer need, refers to the ups and downs of life, the good times and the bad, the times when things are going our way and the times when they aren't, the times when we are on the mountaintops and the times when we're down in dark ravines.

He's saying that he has learned the secret about going through life, and remember, this is about 25 years after he had believed on the Lord. Like all of us, Paul approached life and the problems one encounters in life, from the standpoint of one's own strength and works. As he did in Asia where he became deeply depressed because he was trusting in himself and not in God. *“For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:”* 2 Corinthians 1:8,9

It doesn't take too many distressing times in one's life to come to the conclusion that, ***this isn't working!*** That is, trying to handle my problems in my own strength and ideas always ends up with me becoming totally miserable. So we give up on our own ideas and begin to look in the Word for God's solution for living life.

So after many years of trial and error, or bumping our heads against the wall, we find that God has a perfect solution for everything in life that we will ever come across and it is found in the power of the Holy Spirit. How ironic, and typically human, that after searching the world over for our answer, it was within us all along! The power lies within us in the indwelling Holy Spirit, **but the knowledge of all this comes from the teaching of the Word of God.** It is vital, therefore, that the believer in Christ is being instructed correctly in these matters by the teaching of a good Pastor in a local church.

So Paul is saying in effect, now I know. He has this inner knowledge that is characterized by complete, unshakable confidence in the Lord's ability to carry him through life and all the problems he'll ever encounter along the way. He knows what the solution is for having power to live life. In fact, he puts it as, *“I've been instructed into the mystery”*.

The word for instruct is the perfect passive indicative of *mueo*, which is a loan word from the mystery religions. The Apostle Paul was not only familiar with Judaism from his own first hand personal experience, but he was also familiar with the mystery religions of those days for it was all around him in society. The Elysian mysteries, Mithraism and the Gnostics, whose influence he was always trying to keep from perverting Christianity.

The Gnostics were those who knew certain concepts about life, the cosmos, etc., because they had been initiated into the mystery of the mystery religion. All this business was handed down to them after the flood from Cush to their day and even on to our time. It's the old lie of Satan in the garden that man can become deity by possessing certain knowledge. Paul even refuted that with his coinage of the term *epignosis*. In effect he was saying, You have knowledge, *gnosis*, well we have a super knowledge – *epignosis*!

But the key here is not about the substance of the mysteries, but about the mechanics of how they came to possess this inner comprehension of a truth. And this is where *mueo* comes in. *Mueo* is the verb form of *mysterion* and looks at the process by where the masters brought the initiates to the place of understanding certain things.

First of all it was a process that went on over a period of time, usually it took many years, and it also entailed learning academic things, the utilization of the own initiate's thought process where he reflected on certain things, symbolism, the acting out of concepts in pageants, dramas, plays, having to go through things in life, etc..

So, after having to go through different things in life, some pleasant, some painful, some happy, some sad, combined with the instructions that they were receiving from those above them, the acting out of the mysteries in plays, dramas and pageants, and one's own personal application and reflection on the concepts of the mystery itself, the mystery religion student came to the place where he finally realized something!

It wasn't an academic knowledge that he would be talking about; he already been given that and had been developing it over many years; it referred to an inner realization of something. He now saw something in the mind's eye that he did not see before. He could now say that he had been initiated into the mystery!

The perfect tense of *mueo* is used to show a similar progression in knowledge and understanding in the Apostle Paul's life. It began at a point in time, Paul's salvation, then over a period of years and a variety of experiences that Paul had to go through in life, combined with the teaching of the Word of God, Paul got to the place where he realized something in the inner man. The perfect tense shows not only a progression in the concept of learning something, but it coming to a completed state with existing results that continue on into the future

What did he finally realize? “*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*” Philippians 4:13 Or, “*I am strong for all things through Christ who strengthens me.*” *παντα ισχυω εν τω ενδυναμουντι με χριστω*. **Paul now realized that the power of God was always there for him to live life by with all its problems.**

B. Empowered by Christ

“*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*” παντα ισχυω εν τω ενδυναμουντι με χριστω Philippians 4:13

The translation of “*I can do*” does not accurately relate what's going on in the concept. The Greek has it as the present active indicative of, ισχυω, *ischuo*. Which would be better rendered as, “*I am strong for all things*”, παντα ισχυω, *panta ischuo*. There are several words in the Greek used for the concept of power, but each brings forth its own meaning.

For example we have ***dunamis***, from which we get dynamite, which brings out the idea of raw power or force of some kind. There is the power of lightning, nuclear energy, electrical energy, magnetic energy, there is the power of love, and there is the power of the Holy Spirit.

Another Greek word that has been translated as power is ***exousias***, but *exousias* really speaks of the legal right to exercise power over people and should be translated as authority. When government officials talk about the power they have, what they are really saying is that they have been given authority over people. When Christ spoke about the all power and authority that the Father had given him; he was saying that the Father gave him the legal right, and the force of power, to cast demons out, raise the dead, etc..

Another word for power is ***krataios***. But *krataios* looks at the power of a political ruler, kings, potentates, prime ministers, etc.. It looks at the rule, authority and power that the ruler of a people has over his people. So *krataios* is the rule or dominion of a ruler. *Kratos* is used of the dominion of death over which Satan rules. “*That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;*” Hebrews 2:14b

Energeia is also used for power, but it also refers to the power of ideas. The ancients believed that the *daimones*, demons, were able to infuse their ideas into the minds of men and used the word *energeia* to refer to that phenomenon. So that when men were inspired with the ideas of the cosmic powers, whether good or bad, *energeia* was used.

Then we get down to the word used here, ***ischuo***. The word was used to denote that one prevails over something, and that one is able to prevail over a situation because he or she possesses the power to do so. Two armies meet on the battlefield in a clash of arms. The one that defeats the other army is the one that has prevailed in battle. Now they might have possessed better strategy and tactics; it might have been because they vastly outnumbered their opponents, or that their men were far superior fighters, or had greater courage, or because they possessed superior weapons, or the element of surprise, but what ever the reason was they had the power to meet their enemy on the field and defeat them!

As we go through life we will encounter many things: setbacks, disappointments, hurt, suffering, sorrow, the loss of friends and family, pressure, the attacks of Satan, physical frailty and injury, advancing years, financial problems, etc., these are the situations, *the all things*, as it has it here, that threaten to stop us dead in our tracks, even destroy us!

How we can handle them? How can we overcome them so we can keep moving forward in life? How can we prevail victorious over the trials of life? The answer lies in the indwelling Holy Spirit, that is, in the Spirit of Christ. When it says, “***I am strong for all things***”, it's saying that I have the strength to not only meet each and every situation in life, but **to be victorious over it** through Christ!

It is not our power that prevails, but the power of Jesus Christ that is in every believer in Christ that prevails over the *all things* of life. It is, “*through Christ who strengthens me.*”; it is not through **our** strength and **our** works. It is the **power**, *dunamis*, of Jesus Christ, through his Spirit, that gives us the strength or whatever it is that we need, that empowers us to **prevail**, *ischuo*, over every situation!

This is what Paul finally realized between the time he wrote 2 Corinthians, around 56 AD to 57 AD, (where he was so depressed), and the time he wrote this letter in 62 AD. What happened, what did Paul learn that transformed his soul from one of utter depression and despair to one of peace and confidence?

It wasn't just a concept of academics. Many of us have the academics, but often they aren't translated out into a usable, profitable dynamic in our lives. We know these things academically, but they haven't been able, for some reason, to go down into the soul where they can help us and change us.

This is where the idea of *mueo* comes in. This isn't to say that Christianity is a mystery religion, or that it employs mystery religion concepts in it. But there are many concepts in learning that we have been subjected to, from the classroom in school, to the lectures by our parents, or having some boss, or drill instructor yell at us; and sometimes we learn in the “school of hard knocks”. *Mueo* describes a process utilizing several things over a period of time, where the information goes down into a certain area of the soul where the individual can now “see” it. Now he understands it; it has become a part of him and has changed him.

Many a young man or woman have wanted to make money and become successful in life, but for some reason they have never made it. They don't understand why they can't, and they don't understand how others can. They work very hard at it, they have received a fine education in business, and studied all the self help books they could find, yet it all remains a baffling *mystery* to them. They conclude that others are just lucky. Until one day an older man with money takes them under his wings as a patron, and *introduces* them to the business world. The patron is now their instructor in the mystery and they have become the initiate. They go with him to business meetings, to the golf course, to social mixers, to private negotiations, he introduces them to the right people, he shows them how to make the right contacts and develop them, how to dress, how to talk, how to deal with certain kind of people and many other things.

It all might be a little confusing to them at first, but through the process of being tutored by the patron they are being initiated into the *mystery* of the business world and making money. In the process their “eyes are being opened”.

Similarly with the Apostle Paul, somewhere in the five year time between abject despair and confidence, Paul learned something about life, himself and the Lord. He realized that he was not strong in himself to meet these problems and that only the Lord had the power to strengthen Paul and give him the victory over his circumstances.

The power has been there all along, the believer's knowledge about God's power, either through Bible class, reading the Bible, or about hearing about it from other believers, could very well have existed almost from the first days of being a believer in Christ. But all of that speaks of academic knowledge and not the process of *mueo*, where one is initiated into something.

For this to occur there **first of all** has to be the academic knowledge on the subject; it all begins with Bible Doctrine. And this doctrine has to be accurately taught by the Pastor-Teacher, who himself must know what the Word teaches about the subject of Christ strengthening us. There is a lot of false teaching on the subject of Christ's strengthening of his people from the pulpits today. Not that they state incorrectly that Christ strengthens his people, **but they don't instruct them correctly on how he does this**.

The **next thing** that needs to be brought into the equation are the tests, the trials, the difficulties of life. There has to be **the opportunity for the power of Christ to be manifested**. Or else why would we come to God for help, if there is no time of need. *“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”* Hebrews 4:16

The **next thing** that has to be present is the exercise of faith in the Lord and his promises. When one comes to the end of their works, to the end of their ideas, their striving and trying, then they are at the place where the Lord can operate in their lives, both inwardly and outwardly. But this is one of the hardest lessons for believers to learn.

Usually whenever we encounter a problem, the first thing that goes through our minds is that we wish it would go away. When it doesn't, then we get all tied up in knots because we figure that **we** have to figure out how we're going to deal with it. That's our works in operation. And after awhile, after doing everything we know how to do, and we can't solve it, it is then that we go to the Lord. The one who has been initiated, though, into the *mystery* of God's power goes to the Lord first!

Paul realized this at the end of his letter in 2 Corinthians 12:9,10, *“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect **in weakness**. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.”*

Then there's the time factor. Over a period of time of seeing our failures when we try to handle the problem, and also seeing the Lord solve our problems, we come to the place of faith/confidence of **knowing that we're strong for all things through Christ**.

In life we will go through many problems and trials, some of them of crisis proportions. There are the things that we have already gone through, and there are the things we will be going through in the future. So we have the past, the present and the future. The past we can't do anything about; we're not in the future yet, so all we have is the present.

The process of *mueo* deals with the present state of the mind that has come to a certain realization through a concept of learning. When we look back at our failures, we realize that we failed because we didn't trust the Lord and apply Bible Doctrine to the situation. When we look back at our victory in the trial; we realize that it was because we applied the Word to the situation, prayed to the Lord and trusted him to solve the problem, which he did. We prevailed because of God's power.

We saw that when we went through the trial in our own strength, we ended up anxious, fearful, angry and basically controlled by the old sin nature of the flesh. But when we trusted the Lord in the matter, we not only came through the other side, but **we had peace through the whole thing**. God took us through the fiery ordeal **and we had peace** while going through things that destroy others around us!

So, over a period of time, and looking back on these things, we come to a place in our lives where we conclude something concerning faith, our relationship with the Lord, the Father, God taking care of us, the indwelling Holy Spirit, the new man, etc., and that is, *"I am strong for all things through Christ which strengthens me."*

And it is crucial to understand the need for faith in all this. Faith in the Word of God, faith in his promises, faith in the Father's plan, power and provisions. **For it is in the sphere of faith that we find the power of the Holy Spirit operating in our lives leaving us with peace in our souls!** *"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, (in the sphere of faith), that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."* Romans 15:13

When the believer in Christ operates in his own strength, which is operating in the flesh, and in his own works, the activities of the flesh, then he is operating outside the filling of the Holy Spirit, the power of the Holy Spirit and the peace of God. It's either man is doing the work or God. If man does the work, then he is doing it by the power of his flesh nature, with the resultant frustration problems on the one hand of anger, fear, etc., and pride on the other. But if God is doing the work, then there is not only the successful solving of the problem, which gives us a **practical victory** over the situation, but there is also the peace which he gives us in our souls, which gives us the **spiritual victory!**

To have the tactical victory over a situation in the angelic conflict, that is, to prevail over pressure, our problems, over the rejection by others, demonic attacks and all the other things that assault us from the world system, the flesh nature and the attacks of the devil, the believer needs two things; **he needs power and he needs to have truth**. The truth comes from the accurate teaching of the Word of God, and the power comes from the filling of the indwelling Holy Spirit. **When these two are present in the believer's soul, he will prevail, *ischuo*, over the situation.**

That's where faith and the Word of God comes in. When we believe the promises of God, and having acknowledged our sins to God, the *gnosis* knowledge of God is changed into an *epignosis* form of Bible knowledge, which is in essence spiritual phenomena. It is this *epignosis* knowledge which renews our new nature, which is referred to as **spiritual renewal**, or *anakainosis*. “*And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.*” Colossians 3:10

Christ strengthens us through the filling of the indwelling Holy Spirit in the sphere of our faith in his Word, or our trust in him. Actually the word is *ενδυναμουντι* , *endunamoo*, which means to be strengthened inwardly, or on the inside where the new man is. So it is **Christ who inwardly strengthens us.**

The English word prevail, which is the idea of *ischuo*, means to be or prove superior in strength, power, or influence, to prevail over the enemy in a battle, to succeed, to become dominant, to win out. It has the same force of meaning of victory, which is to triumph over an enemy in a battle or war.

Now this concept of prevailing becomes vital to us when going through life and its many trials. Some of the trials that believers are going through are: serious or prolonged sickness, disease, or injuries; the immediate shock and the months of grieving over the death of a loved one; the immediate shock and all the emotional reactor factors over the following months and even years of going through a divorce; of being unemployed for a long period of time, with all the accompanying fears, doubts, loss of self esteem, maybe even friends or spouse and sense of loss; loss or degradation of one's business, income, or retirement portfolio; being forced to relocate to another town or state and have to start all over again; career changes or career loss, especially when protracted out, once again, over a long period of time; having to live in a time of apostasy and in an area where the people have become basically nuts, and you're not one of them (hopefully), all the while you remember the times when people were normal. The list can be quite long.

Having to go through these things is painful and difficult, especially so when it seems to go on forever and there seems to be no end in sight. You've tried everything that you now how to do to change the situation, but alas to no avail. So what do you do? How does one keep oneself from being crushed by all this? How can I, not only go through all this and not only survive, but how can I prevail over it all?

And this is what *ischuo* is all about. *Ischuo* says that we will be empowered by Christ, so that we have the strength, and the wisdom, to ultimately come through the other side of this long and tedious ordeal victoriously! And it's accomplished by means of Christ strengthening us in the inner man.

The word *ischuo*, “*I am strong*”, is the present active indicative of *ischuo*, which tells us that it was continually going on in Paul's life everyday; and to be strengthened, *endunamoo*, is in the present active participle, which tells us that Christ's continual, daily strengthening of the Apostle Paul is what gave Paul the power to prevail over his circumstances, whether good or bad.

Our tendency as people is one, that we don't want to go through difficult times, and two, if we have to, then we want them over right away. But things don't always work out that way. Sometimes we have to go through things that go on for months, or years! So what do we do? We keep taking in the Word of God everyday; we keep living by the filling of the Holy Spirit each day; we keep living by faith and claiming the promises of God each day, **and each day we will find that we are being strengthened while we are in the trial!** Then one day, we find ourselves on the other side of it victorious!

In verse 12 Paul wrote that he had been initiated into the mystery of how to go through life with its ups and downs, with its good times and bad times, when things go our way and when they don't, when we are under pressure and when we feel free as a bird, when we have good health and when we are suffering, when we are surrounded by those who love us and when they all go away. And he says that the “secret” that he learned in all this is being constantly empowered by Jesus Christ!

This power is activated in us through the exercise of faith in the Word of God, as we are filled with the Holy Spirit, and operating in our new natures. *“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, (in the sphere of faith), that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.”* Romans 15:13

When Paul used the word *mueo* to describe the process of learning whereby he came to this realization of a spiritual truth concerning a spiritual dynamic, he was describing a learning process whereby the student came to a place of completion or perfection. The mysteries believed, and still do, that man, the natural unregenerate man on earth, can actually come to a place of perfection by the acquiring of esoteric knowledge. This was the lie fostered by Satan in the garden, and this is the lie of the Babylonian Mystery religion that is sweeping over the entire world.

There is a true state of completion for believers in Christ, but it is not found in the mysteries. It is found in the metabolizing of Bible Doctrine by faith, in living by faith in the filling of the Holy Spirit, by living in the new nature, and as this all goes on over a period of time the believer will come to the place of completion.

He then will realize that he has been given the power through Christ to meet every situation in life that he comes to, and goes through, victoriously! Such knowledge not only gives him comfort, joy and peace for the present, but it also gives him confidence toward the future! Now he knows something deep down inside at the core of existence that has changed him. He now realizes something that were only words before to him. He has been “initiated into the mystery”, which is not a mystery at all to believers because the Word has revealed it to all believers.

It took Paul many years to come to the realization that **God's grace is sufficient for him, and that God's power is sufficient to give him the victory over every situation in life he goes through**, and God wants all believers to come to this same faith realization in their lives also.

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