

STRENGTH FOR ANYTHING

"I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." Philippians 4:13.

These striking words may sound like an idle boast of a bold braggart, but they are not. Rather, they are the triumphant expression of a self-distrustful soul that has found its way to the source of inexhaustible power. Paul had tried Christ under all conditions and circumstances of life, and had found Him equal to every emergency. As a result of his absolute reliance on Christ, Paul jubilantly testified to the measureless resources within this realm of dependence. Christ was the great giver, and Paul was the grateful receiver.

Concerning our subject, "Strength For Anything," or "The Life That Knows No Defeat," I want you to observe three things:

I. The Source Of It.

Paul acknowledged that the ability to live contentedly, victoriously and usefully came from a higher source than himself. He wrote, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." Dr. J. B. Phillips translated this statement in these words: "I am ready for anything through the strength of him who lives within me." The Weymouth translation renders this verse in these words: "I have strength for anything through him who gives me power." The Rotherham translation presents it in slightly different form, "I have might for all things in him that empowereth me." A more literal translation of the text is, "I can do all things in the Christ who empowers me," or "I can do all things in the Christ who continues to pour his power into me." "I am made strong for all things in the Christ who constantly infuses strength into me."

Empower means to pour power into, or to infuse strength into another. As long as Christ kept on putting power into Paul, the Apostle had adequate strength for every need. The verb which may be translated empower is in the present tense, and that denotes continued action. Paul was grateful for the living power which Christ was pouring into him in preparation for whatever he might be called upon to endure. But, we should remember that Christ infused strength into Paul not for the gratification of his personal desires, but for the fulfillment of the Lord's purpose and the carrying out of His will.

This staggering statement is characterized by both a sense of triumph and of humility. At first Paul sounds like he is boasting, and yet when you look at his statement closely you will observe that it is one of the most glorious tributes he could have paid his Lord, Who was the source of all of Paul's strength, and the same is true of us.

Christ is the source of all power for victorious living and acceptable service. Apart from Him we are helpless, and our efforts are in vain. Regardless of how numerous our talents, or plentiful our resources, or complete our organization, nothing worthwhile can be accomplished without Christ. We should cultivate our talents, develop our resources, and perfect our organization, but we shall make a colossal blunder if we depend on these things instead of Christ.

Paul claimed that he had mastered the circumstances of this life through contact with Christ, Who is the source of the life that knows no defeat.

In making the transition from "I know" to "I can," he changed knowledge into power. He swept circumstances into the same category of absolutely mastered conditions, and made the startling assertion, "I can do all things in the Christ who continues to pour His power into me." Thus, he modestly but frankly explained what he had experienced and accomplished. He was equal to all demands only because Christ strengthened him.

Each of us needs strength, whether or not we are conscious of that need, but none of us has the inherent strength to meet the demands that are made upon us. Every believer is weak in himself, but allied to Christ he is able to overcome evil and to do good. The strength which is in Christ is superhuman, but the glorious thing about that strength is that it is available for every believer who will receive it.

Paul remembered full well that throughout his gospel ministry not a day had gone by without some manifestation of a power that could transform hearts, reform lives and perform Christian activities. He encountered numerous hardships and much trouble, but he had peace within, due to the indwelling Christ. His Master strengthened him by His grace, by His example, by His promises and by His power. Therefore, it is no wonder that he wrote, "I can do all things in the Christ Who continues to pour his power into me."

Christ will infuse His strength into you. What a wonderful idea! There is a similarity between a blood transfusion and what Paul is teaching here. For some reason or another a patient loses much blood. He is gasping for breath. There is no use in giving him drugs because he does not have enough blood to absorb them and use them. The only thing that can be done for him is to give him a blood transfusion, infuse blood into him. That is the sort of thing that Paul tells us that Christ Jesus was doing for him. In substance he says, "I find that I am extremely weak, and it seems that I do not have any energy at all, but because of my relationship to Christ He infuses the very strength into me which I need. Christ is also the only source of strength which we need for anything and everything.

II. The Scope Of It.

A sense of inability to meet life's claims upon us is very depressing. When people realize how much there is to do, some become victims of pessimism, while others are gripped by hopelessness. Paul's broad assertion, "I can do all things in the Christ who continues to pour His power into me," should be a wonderful inspiration to all discouraged believers.

Paul never attempted to explain all the vicissitudes of life. He simply mentioned the fact that Christ had imparted to him the grace and strength to stand up and take anything that came his way in life. Strengthened by Christ, Paul was able to master every situation in which he was placed. Time after time, he extracted victory from apparent defeat. Even when all the odds were stacked against him, the Lord gave him sufficient grace and strength to emerge victorious. On one occasion, he was placed in the most unfavorable circumstances, and all his friends forsook him. In referring thereto he said, "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me and strengthened me" (II Timothy 4:17). He had peace in his soul, valor in his spirit, and victory in his life. He was able to endure all things to which God called him, and to achieve all things that he was commanded to do, because Christ continued to pour His power into him just as he needed it. When Paul asserted that he could do "all things," he had in mind only those things that were in the will of God for his life.

Christ "keeps on pouring his power into me." The supply of the strength is uninterrupted. A constant stream flows into the believer to maintain

a sufficiency for any demand. No withering winds of want or icy storms of adversity reduce the inflow of this strength. It is kept at a proper level to enable the believer to be what Christ wants him to be, to bear what He wants us to endure, and to do all the things He commands us to do. If we are tried unduly, He keeps on pouring in enduring strength; if we are being tempted above what we are able to bear, He comes with overcoming power; if we are being overwhelmed with sorrow, He pours in succouring strength. He is ever at hand and administers His undiminishing strength in proportion to our needs.

To learn fully that we can do nothing of ourselves, but that we can obtain sufficient strength to do the will of our Lord, regardless of what that will is, is a lesson of paramount importance. Christ does not demand the impossible, or that for which He does not guarantee sufficient strength. He provides the necessary strength for every duty and every emergency. "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (II Corinthians 12:9). "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). While it is quite clear that we can neither think, nor speak, nor act unless He enables us to do so, it is just as true that He gives us strength in proportion to the work to which He calls us. When our duties are extraordinary, we can always rely upon Him for extraordinary supplies of grace and strength. The power is provided as the work is done.

It is worth everything to us to be able to truthfully say what Paul said. Not only is this true in our personal lives, but also in our church life with its great tasks, high professions, and unsatisfactory achievements. In these days of doubt, disillusionment, and dismay, we need to remember that the same power which Paul possessed is available to each of us as believers in Christ. We, too, may have adequate strength to meet every emergency in this world of sin and strife, because the Christ who poured His power into Paul is unchanging.

Let us consider a few of the "all things" Paul could do in the Christ who continued to pour His power into him, bearing in mind that all Christians can do the same things.

1. He could overcome his temptations.

From his acceptance of Christ until his death, Paul had a constant battle with Satan who daily tempted him to sin. But, he overcame these temptations because Christ continued to pour His power into him. Likewise, in the strength of Christ there is victory for those of us who are Christians. If you have a violent temper, Christ's power will enable you to conquer it. If you are timid, He can make you bold. If you are lazy, His power can make you energetic. If you are unstable, He can enable you to settle down and become dependable. "As thy days so shall thy strength be."

2. He could endure his sufferings.

Instead of complaining or despairing, Paul maintained the attitude that I can endure anything as long as Christ "continues to pour His power into me."

3. He could discharge his duties.

No matter how difficult the assignment Paul received from the Lord, he tried his best to do it through Christ who continued to pour His power into him. He firmly believed the Lord could do it through him.

4. He could meet death unafraid.

Paul wrote, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 15:55-57). But how did Paul react in that last hour when he had to face the grim reaper, whose name is death? Did his courage fail, or was his strength sufficient? The answer to these questions is found in his own statement: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Timothy 4:6-8).

III. The Satisfaction Of It.

It is truly wonderful to have the power of the living Christ offered to us. By all means, we should cheerfully receive it. It is by His grace that we are able to accomplish anything that is worthwhile. Most assuredly, He is the fountain of all spiritual strength. "I can do all things in the Christ who continues to pour His power into me."

A life that knows no defeat should claim our most careful attention and most thorough investigation. If we will let Christ continue to pour His power into us, we shall receive a new inspiration and come to have a different outlook on life. Not only will we realize that there is so much work to be done for our Master in this sin-cursed world, but we shall come to understand that He is depending on His people to do it. While the work is too large for our strength, it can never be too large for the power of Christ. We can do His work in a most acceptable manner, and enjoy the life that knows no defeat, if we will only go forth in the power of the living Christ.

We need no other inspiration or aid than Christ in whom is light, and life, and love and liberty. He can meet every need of our souls. He will walk with us in blessed companionship, completely satisfy the longings of our souls, and help us in every time of need. He is a forgiving, burden-bearing, and victory-giving Christ. Knowing Him intimately, we shall understand the real meaning of life, and know what to do and what to expect.

If you will really turn to Christ, who is immutable in His love, unfailing in his resources, and unwearied in His oversight, Christ will pour His power into you and you will enjoy the same experience that Paul had. You will find that Christ will enable you to do His blessed will, for truly His strength is limitless. Without any fear of contradiction, I frankly say that Christ has helped us, He is helping us, and He will still continue to help us. As He continues to help us by pouring His power into us, we shall enjoy an indescribable satisfaction of soul in living the life that knows no defeat.