

What Can You Expect? **Part II - Strengthened by His Might**

“That He may grant you according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man that Christ may settle down in your hearts through faith...” (Ephesians 3:16,17).

But whence comes the power to appropriate the Spirit of God? How can we mortals ever attain such an astounding might? Paul says—“By the power of God Himself” and that is “according to the riches of His glory.” Nor is this merely a “proof text.” The entire passage (14-20) is alive with the vital message that it is God who reaches down to us and not ourselves who ascend the ladder to God. In much of Christendom there is a tendency to put the burden on the human to attain unto God. The formula goes something like this:

- A. Recognize that you are a sinner.
- B. Confess your sins.
- C. Renounce your sins.
- D. Exercise faith in God.
- E. Declare your faith publicly.
- F. Submit yourself to the lordship of Christ.
- G. Confirm your salvation by changing your behavior patterns.

This is what I call “step-ladder salvation.” If you climb to the top of the ladder and stand on your “tippy toes” the Lord might help you, that is, if you can muster up enough faith. The truth of the matter is that we have no power whatsoever to ever attain God’s favor, much less the indwelling presence of His Spirit. But this is not the message of Jesus who said, “*Without me you can do nothing,*” and again, “*Those that are whole need not a physician, but those that are sick.*” The list of conditions that often accompany invitations to come to Christ require a person to be pretty much “whole” before being able to accomplish them. Jesus used as an example of the “justified” a publican who would not so much as lift his eyes to heaven but cried out, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” And of course Paul echoes this theme—“*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us...*” Moreover, according to Paul, even faith itself is a gift of God—“*Not of works lest anyone should boast.*”

From whence, indeed, comes the power? From God Himself. **Strengthened with might through His Spirit.** The word translated “strengthened” is from *kratos*—literally, “grip.” It is the root of many of our English words which have to do with the seat of power in government—“autocracy,” “aristocracy,” “democracy.” Who is it that has the grip on the people? A single monarch? A few? The people themselves? Akin to this are the words “monarchy,” “oligarchy,” “poligarchy.” The Greek word *archae* means “chief” or ruler. Thus, the emphasis on the later is the nature of the rulership, while the former focuses on the power intrinsic to that rulership.

The word “might” on the other hand, is *dunamis* which has to do with the nature of the power. From this word comes our English word—“dynamite.” Thus, the focus of this word is the nature of the power, which is ultimate or complete. The word “strength” is not adequate, because it is only relative.

Dunamis and *kratos* both depict the invincible power of God. Thus, in the process of the lifting of the human to the realm of the divine, we are dealing not with the relative strength of human resolve, but the limitless power of God. It is not, in any respect, a joining of our human resolve with God's assistance, but rather the ultimate capability of Christ "to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him" (Hebrews 7:25). Here, the Greek phrase translated "uttermost" means "unto total consummation." No human effort can accomplish this.

According to the riches of His glory. Thus, the extension of God's power to us in no way implies prerequisite human effort—faith or fervency or perseverance. It is all according to the "glory of God," which is as limitless as the skies that shine in the heavens and the universe which knows no human limits.

Any thought that salvation or the presence of the Holy Spirit within the human spirit is conditioned upon human efforts, is totally absurd. The human effort is simply "**God, help!**" And that includes all of God's benevolences to His creatures. Paul asks, "*What hast thou that thou hast not received [as a gift]?*" There is a popular movement that insists that God has extra special blessings for you (as for example tongues) if only you will follow certain conditions. The tragedy of that system is that human beings cannot meet those conditions apart from the Holy Spirit. Such ones are caught in a cyclical trap—"The Spirit will not help you unless you do your part." Unfortunately, one cannot meet those conditions unless one has the Holy Spirit.

It is patently true that human beings do exercise faith and fervency and perseverance in the fleshly sense—that is with the human mind—but such human qualities are not adequate, as Nicodemus found out to accomplish the new birth into the Kingdom of God. Those who try to prove their fervency to God by long prayer vigils or fastings or self-denial are no different than those that become devotees of some cultic movement. Any Moslem can be a martyr to the *Jihad*. When Jesus said to the disciples, "*If anyone come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross,*" He meant to deny the self as an instrument of salvation. There is a difference between denying self (as an instrument of salvation) and self-denial as a bartering chip for the favor of God. The natural outflow of the spirit within will be a sensitivity to the snares of this world. But refraining from the snares of the world in the flesh, will not develop of itself, new life in the spirit. Similarly, religious fervor, even to the point of martyrdom will not enhance our favor with God. Nothing short of the glory and power of God passing through our spirits can ever tie us eternally to Himself.

So what can you expect? You can expect God—having filled you with His Spirit—to hold you in the grip of His power, not according to the poverty of your own feeble religious efforts, but "according to the riches of His glory."

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