

July 20, 2010

## We Were Given Power!

*"When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the called-out ones"* (1 Corinthians 14:26). Coming together having been already prepared by the Spirit of Christ to do your part to strengthen and edify the others is an essential feature of authentic fellowship.

The Body of Christ is a *living organism* calling for each part to fully function — no spiritual spectators here! This is the essential meaning of *koinonia/fellowship* that appears 20 times in reference to the kinship of the first followers of Jesus. (See, for example, Acts 2:42; Philippians 2:1,2; Romans 12:10; 1 Peter 3:8.) *Koinonia* conveys the sense of community, communion, joint participation, sharing and intimacy. That's why Paul could exhort his spiritual family in Rome, *"Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification"* (Romans 14:19). Notice also that much of Paul's ministry as he revisited faith communities was to *strengthen* them. It's easy to recognize that spiritual gifts are given so that we may serve one another, and build up and edify each other to do our Father's will. For example: *"...he who prophesies edifies the called-out ones"* (1 Corinthians 14:4).

### Power = Altitude; Attitude = Airspeed

We live close to the Colorado Springs Airport. Yesterday morning we found ourselves biking on the nearby perimeter road while a small plane was coming in for a landing. As I [Mike] watched the plane descend toward the runway, I heard in my mind an old axiom from my days as a Navy pilot: *"Power = Altitude; Attitude = Airspeed."* For the next several minutes the Holy Spirit revealed to me an important principle based on this accepted truth in aviation.

#### Power = Altitude

The height of the aircraft above the ground is dependent on the amount of power the engine is producing. The word "power" is bandied around a lot in advertisement today but basically, power is the capacity to accomplish something. Taking this a step further: "spiritual power" is a God-given capacity to be able to do His will, that is, to fulfill the purposes He's prepared for us to accomplish in His Kingdom for His glory (see Ephesians 2:10).

*Spiritual power* is an untapped, readily dismissed reality among so much of westernized Christendom today. Entrenched in the humanist, intellectualized belief system that permeates our society, much of organized religion relies on sheer human effort to achieve the latest, most pressing man-made goals. One of the reasons that Spirit-endowed power and gifts are not earnestly sought in this country in particular is that few if any self-proclaimed "Christians" are burdened for the depth of righteous living our

Father calls for in His children through His Word.

Keep in mind that missiologists now classify the United States a "post-Christian nation." Europe was designated a "post-Christian continent" decades ago. Westernized, man-centered Christendom has forsaken the interests and goals of our Father, focusing on transitory worldly wants rather than on the will of God (1 John 2:17). So few today sense the burden of His heart for the salvation of mankind — the very purpose for which our Savior shed His precious blood! Yet, He isn't passively standing by as His Name is being defamed among those who have yet to bow before Jesus as Lord. No, He is responding according to the veracity of His own Word: ***"The LORD's curse is on the house of the wicked [unrepentant], but He blesses the home of the righteous [repentant]"*** (Proverbs 3:33; see also Ezekiel 36:21,22).

Today so many "Christian" homes are beset by the tensions, chaos and apprehension brought about by *unrighteousness in their midst*. Recall that "Christians" far surpass unbelievers in divorce — and make excuses to rationalize their right to break covenant with the partner of their youth (Malachi 2:14,15). "Wickedness", that is, tolerated sin, is resulting in a pandemic number of "Christian" homes that are *not* blessed by God but rather cursed by Him. And far too many of the people in these homes are turning to "Christian" counselors to ease their emotional discomfort rather than examining their hearts in honest repentance so that they might find forgiveness and restored fellowship (1 John 1:6-10).

If your heart yearns to enjoy wonderful intimacy with our Lord and to walk in the power and strength of His Spirit to fulfill His plans for your life, then live repentantly! We may stumble as redeemed sinners, but we do not have to go on giving way to temptation and living in sin. (See 1Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 2:18, 4:15.) Be quick to appropriate the heart and mind of Christ and repent when His Spirit convicts you that you've violated His Word by attitude or action. And as you live repentantly, don't rest until you have the power of His Spirit to carry out your part in His Kingdom! YOU are His beloved instrument through whom Father works: ***"With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of His calling, and that by His power He may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith"*** (2Thessalonians 1:11).

Have you realized how devoted Paul was to PRAY on behalf of his brothers and sisters that they be counted worthy of their calling, strengthened with Spirit power that works from within, and rooted and established in the love that surpasses any intellectual explanation?

***"I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.***

***Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory among the called out ones and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen"*** (Ephesians 3:16-21).

### **Attitude = Airspeed**

How high or how low the nose of the airplane is to the horizon — its attitude — determines how fast it will fly. The lower the nose, the faster the airspeed. We'll be using the word "attitude" to describe a way of thinking or feeling that's reflected in a person's behavior. Let's look at the type of attitude our heavenly Father calls for in His children throughout His Word. *His will* is what His indwelling Spirit empowers His own to both desire and to be able to carry out (Philippians 2:12,13). And fulfilling His Father's will was the purpose and goal Jesus imparted as an example to His followers for all time (John 4:34; 6:38).

Father God has made clear two primary goals for His children while we dwell here below: **1.** That each of us become more like Jesus as He perfects us in love and obedience (1John 4:17). **2.** That we fulfill His will on earth (Matthew 6:10; Romans 12:2). Each of these purposes requires spiritual power and a clear understanding of our Father's means of perfecting Christ's character in His children. Though often denied by those enmeshed in man-pleasing religious systems which have compromised with worldly values, His primary method of character development in us is through *suffering*:

***The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us"***  
(Romans 8:16-18)

The Bible leaves no doubt that our God is sovereign over all matters in our lives. Our Creator and Maker is well aware of the pain and suffering we've endured. He has designed specific means of refining the trust in each of us that it may be proved genuine. Out of confident hope we are called by our Father to persevere, so that when we've done His will, we'll receive His glorious promise (Hebrews 10:35,36).

Rather than having you hold onto the chains of begrudging bitterness or grumble against the people who caused your pain, our Father directs you to cooperate with Him as He uses ALL of your suffering to perfect the character of His Son Jesus in you. This was, in fact, the same regimen Jesus endured *in accordance with His Father's will*: ***"Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from what He suffered"*** (Hebrews 5:8). But sadly, and spiritually counterproductively, many who call themselves Christian have resisted any form of suffering as "not God's will for me." Stunting any spiritual growth in character, they've missed what He would so lovingly do in their lives through His Spirit: **1.** Transform their character to become ever more like Jesus. **2.** Fulfill His will

for their lives on earth to both please Him and bring Him praise. (See Hebrews 10:38,39 for the contrast between those who persevere unto eternal life and those who shrink back unto destruction.)

Because Father loves His sons and daughters, He has our best interests at heart even through the pain we must go through to enjoy the fruit of righteousness and peace. That "discipline", "rebuke", and "punishment" are the means by which we as responsible and loving parents train up our own children to turn away from their sin nature's harmful outworking and turn toward that which is good and pleasing to us and to our Lord. Doesn't this next passage shake any concept you may have of a "doting grandfather" kind of God who excuses sin? **"My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when He rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes everyone He accepts as a son...No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it"** (Hebrews 12:5,6,11; see also Proverbs 3:12).

Paul, a man too well acquainted with hardship and pain, speaks for all who would authentically follow Jesus as Lord of each and every aspect of their lives. Never lose sight of the apostle's heart desire both for this life and the next: **"I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead"** (Philippians 3:10,11). *Knowing* Christ the way Paul cites is an intimate heart connection with the Lord of life that far surpasses intellectual assent that He exists. *Knowing* Him is the kind of relationship that keeps you persevering through His Spirit when everything seems to be painfully disintegrating around you — whether your marriage, your kids, your close friends, your job, or your home. Paul intended to offer words of comfort and encouragement when he proclaimed that He counted all things loss — even rubbish! — for the sake of knowing and gaining Christ as Lord of his life (Philippians 3:8).

In 1 Peter 1:6-9 we discover that in the midst of suffering grief we prove to our Father that our faith in Him is genuine. That's His way of helping us to achieve His eternal purpose: **"you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls"** (v. 9). Remember, we ultimately receive our salvation when we are welcomed by our Lord at the Judgment Throne and He proclaims our name in His Book of Life (Revelation 3:5; see also Matthew 25:31-34). Until then we must be found cooperating with His Spirit in us that our Father's goals for us be made full: **1.** That each of us become more like Jesus; **2.** That we fulfill His will on earth.

With you in the journey,  
**Mike & Sue**