

Living On Divine Power
II Corinthians 4:7-15

God's plan is for us to live and work on His power. This is the reason behind Him choosing to use frail human beings like us. Paul shares this truth with us as he has experienced it. This is both testimony and instruction. After stating that God has chosen to put his treasurer in earthen vessels that the power of God may be expressed through the earthen vessels, he bears testimony as to how this happens.

His testimony is made up of a series of paradoxes. "We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed." Many pressures come upon the life that is committed to God and involved in His service. But because of the divine power in the life of the believer, these pressures never crush the life. "We are perplexed, but not in despair." There are times when the believer does not know what to do. There are times when your human resources just run out, but because you are living on divine power; you are never in despair. The Christian is never in the position in which surrender to the circumstances is the only way out. God is always greater than any circumstance you may face. "Persecuted, but not forsaken." The root idea is the word "persecuted" is to be pursued, to be hunted. There were times in the life of Paul in which he was literally the object of a search. His enemies were on his trail with hate in their hearts. But because of the divine power, he was never forsaken. God is always there even if all others may forsake us. "Struck down, but not destroyed." The circumstances or the enemy may knock us to the ground, but they can never destroy us. Our lives are kept by His power. They are safe until His purpose for us has been accomplished.

This excellent "power" of God is the same as the life of Jesus later in the passage. "That the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our body." This is the life of the ascended and glorified Jesus. This is the life that finds a place in our lives through the indwelling Holy Spirit. When Paul found his life being supernaturally sustained and made fruitful, he acknowledged that it was the very life of the risen Christ being expressed. While the Lord Jesus is exalted to the right hand of God in the heavens, His life is being revealed through some on the earth right now.

This raises an important question. Under what conditions do we live on the power of God? Many of us know that we have been trying to make it on our own power. Our efforts have convinced us that we are earthen vessels, but we have not really experienced the fullness of the power of God in our lives. Three important conditions for experiencing the divine power, the life of Jesus, in your mortal body are set forth in the testimony of Paul.

I. THOSE WHO LIVE FOR JESUS ALONE, LIVE ON DIVINE POWER.

"We always carry around in our bodies the death of Jesus for we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake." A great truth is stated in these words of testimony. It is a fact that from the day he became a Christian until the day he was finally martyred in Rome, Paul was never far away from death. Death was a possibility in most of the days of his Christian life. This is partly a testimony to the kind of world in which he lived, but it is more a testimony to the kind of life he lived. He was always carrying about in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus.

This takes us back to the life and death of the Lord Jesus. The word used by Paul presents the death of Jesus as a process. The final experience was only the climax of this process. His total commitment to the will of His Father in heaven made the Cross inevitable. Since Paul was seeking to emulate the commitment of His Lord, he carried with Him the same process of death. He explains this in the next verse. "For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus sake." The word "always" carried some emphasis in the text. This is a continuous part of the life that lives on the divine power. "Delivered to death" carries in it the idea of being handed over to the executioner. The significance of this is in that it is "on account of Jesus".

What is the lesson for us here? What we have here is a life under the lordship of Jesus Christ. To Him as Lord there is rendered continuous and full obedience. His word of instruction to Paul exposed Him to danger and death day after day. Paul did not draw back from the danger or seek to avoid the death. Rather day after day he reaffirmed his commitment to Jesus as His Lord and moved forward to obey Him. He did not seek to save his life, but was ready to lose it for the sake of Christ. It is such a life that the mighty life of the risen Christ is revealed. Those who live in this way live on divine power. This involves a daily death of self interest and self control, and a daily commitment of life to the Lord Jesus.

II. THOSE WHO LIVE BY FAITH, LIVE ON DIVINE POWER.

This is really just another aspect of living for Jesus. Paul includes it in his explanation of his life "So then death is working in us, but life in you. Such a commitment will be fruitful in influencing and effecting the lives of others for the glory of God. "But since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke", we also believe and therefore speak, knowing that he who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up by Jesus, and will present us with you." Behind the life lived for Jesus alone there is a "spirit of faith". Some would capitalize the word "spirit" in this text and see in it a reference to the faith giving work of the Holy Spirit. It must be admitted that faith is directly related to His wonderful work in our hearts. But it is probably better to understand it in the tense of a disposition of faith, or an attitude of faith, or an impulse of faith. The idea is that behind our actions there is faith.

To support this truth, Paul quotes from the Psalms. In a circumstance filled with danger, the Psalms found courage to speak and to act through the faith that was in his heart. This faith made a word necessary. Behind Paul's bold commitment of life there was such a personal faith. He faced death with the inner assurance born of faith that even if he were put to death, the Lord Jesus that he served was well able to raise him from the death and to present Him at last before the Father. Such a faith will banish fear and cowardice from the life, and will release in the life the very power of God.

Those who live by the spirit of faith do not live on their own resources. They experience the very life of the risen and mighty Christ in their lives day by day. Too many of us are still anchoring our faith to ourselves. We are depending upon our own resources. We are experiencing as a consequence only what we can do. If the divine power is to be revealed in our lives, we must begin to take seriously the walk of faith. Faith does not breed inactivity, but rather moves the life to bold action in the name of the Lord.

III. THOSE WHO LIVE TO BRING OTHERS TO CHRIST, LIVE ON DIVINE POWER.

This is closely connected with the statements about being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake. Each of these statements is an expansion of the one that goes before. "For all things are for your sakes." Paul is speaking to the Corinthians and others who have been the objects of His ministry. The "all things" in this statement are the "all things" of suffering, danger, and difficulty. It is the carrying around in our bodies the death of the Lord Jesus. While in a real sense all of this had been for Jesus' sake, in a practical sense it was for the sake of the people to whom he ministered.

"That grace, having spread through the many." The "spread" of grace is the sharing of the grace of God with others. Through the life and witness of Paul, others were coming to know the same saving grace of God that had saved and filled his life. "The many" is literally the majority. Paul was not content to win only a few - - - he had his heart set on the multitude. Should we not think in terms of the multitude?

"May cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God." This was Paul's ultimate motivation. He earnestly desired to hear the voices of all. Men lifted up to the one true God in praise and thanksgiving. He longed to see every knee bowed before Him in worship. So it was the goal of his daily efforts to bring the saving grace of God to others through the preaching of the Gospel so that another voice might be lifted up in praise to God. Now those who live in this way will be living on the power of God.

The New Testament has a number of references of people being filled with the Holy Spirit, with the life of the risen Christ. Interestingly, there is not one

instance of someone praying to receive this fullness of power. The one place where it is connected with prayer is in Acts 4 where the threatened and endangered disciples are praying for boldness to speak the word of God. They want to have what it takes to bear witness to the Lord to the unsaved even if it costs them their lives. When they prayed like that, Luke reports that they were filled With the Holy Spirit, and the place where they were praying was shaken. Those who are committed to share the word of God will know what it means to live on divine power.

Too many of us are interested in living on the divine power so that we might live a happier and more successful life. God is interested in your living on power so that through you, He may draw others to Himself. Are you interested in cooperating with God?

CONCLUSION:

The text moves my heart. It confronts me with some probing questions. Am I so committed to Christ that I am delivered to death for His sake? Or, can my life be best explained in terms of my maneuvering to save my own hide day by day? Am I moved by my faith in the Lord Jesus more than by my fear of man? Am I involved in sharing the grace of God with others, or content to enjoy it for myself? How I answer those questions will determine how much of the divine power is being manifested through me day by day. Are you ready to live on the divine power?