Christ's Power In Our Weakness

By Rich Carmicheal

These are hard days for many people. For me personally, the past year and a half has been the most difficult period in my life, filled with one trial after another, either in my life or in the lives of people dear to me. The correspondence we receive in the Herald office reminds us that many of you are in the midst of great hardships as well. In many cases, the pressures and problems are too much to bear on our own and with our own limited resources. Thankfully, however, we do not have to face them on our own.

This issue of Herald of His Coming focuses on the Person and power of Christ. Of course, there is vastly more that could be said about Christ than can be said in just a few pages, but the Herald staff hopes nevertheless that you will be encouraged and strengthened in your faith as you take the various messages to heart. In this particular message, I call to your attention the help Christ can give to us as we face difficulties, and the impact that help can have in others' lives.

Learning to Trust the Lord

The Apostle Paul writes that *"just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ"* (2 Cor. 1:5). He goes on to describe how he had just passed through a time of great affliction in which he and his companions were burdened excessively, beyond their own strength, to the point they despaired even of life (v. 8). He then makes this bold statement about his confidence in the Lord: *"Indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves in order that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us…"* (vv. 9-10).

In Paul's case, his very life was in danger. While that may or may not be the case with us, the lesson remains the same. Great trials and pressures in our lives have the potential to help us learn to rely more upon the Lord than we ever have before. When all of the props in our lives get knocked down, including our own self-sufficiency, we are perhaps as humble and open as ever to depend upon the Lord and His resources. There are at least two benefits from this.

The Lord's Wonderful Help

One of the benefits of learning to rely upon the Lord is that we discover how faithful He is to provide the help that we need to sustain us and to enable us to overcome. He is our great High Priest who sympathizes with our weaknesses, and because of Him and His ministry, we can *"draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need"* (Heb. 4:14-16). In Christ and through Christ and by Christ is everything we need. And even more than that, Christ Himself is the One we need. When we fix our gaze upon Him, when we abide in Him, when we clothe ourselves with Him, when we are

Phoca PDF

filled with the Holy Spirit so that Christ dwells in our hearts through faith, then we discover more fully how absolutely sufficient He is.

Here are just a few of the many wonderful promises and truths regarding His ministry toward us:

• *"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest"* (Matt. 11:28).

• *"…My peace I give to you…. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful"* (John 14:27; cf. Phil. 4:7).

• *"…I came that [you] might have life, and might have it abundantly"* (John 10:10).

• *"These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full"* (John 15:11).

• *"…for He Himself has said, 'I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,' so that we confidently say, 'The Lord is my Helper, I will not be afraid…'"* (Heb. 13:5-6).

• *"But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Rom. 8:37-39).

• *"Now may the Lord Jesus Christ Himself…comfort and strengthen your hearts…"* (2 Thes. 2:16-17).

• *"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me"* (Phil. 4:13).

• *"And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 4:19).

• *"…In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world"* (John 16:33).

• *"For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted"* (Heb. 2:18).

• *"…The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed"* (Isa. 53:5; cf. 1 Pet. 2:24-25). w *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9).

• *"...He is able to save completely those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them"* (Heb. 7:25; cf. Rom. 8:34).

• *"…that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their*

Phoca PDF

lives" (Heb. 2:14-15).

• *"Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. ...I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also"* (John 14:1-3; cf. 1 Thes. 4:16-18).

• *"And He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain…"* (Rev. 21:4, regarding our future hope).

The Aroma of Christ

While we are obviously grateful to the Lord for all the wonderful things He does for us as we rely on Him, the greater blessing is that in the process our lives become testimonies to His grace and power. In other words, as people see Christ at work in us, He receives the glory. Our need becomes an opportunity for our lives to reflect His sufficiency. Note how He worked through Paul's hardships:

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body" (2 Cor. 4:7-10).

"And [the Lord] has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:9-10).

Although it may have taken Paul some time to understand the potential of his suffering, he did come to realize that through it Christ had the opportunity to reveal His life and strength. And as a result, Paul also realized he was much more suited for ministry to others.

The same is true for us. Our weaknesses, distresses and difficulties can become instruments for the strength of the Lord in our lives. As we consider the world today, it is obvious that you and I are not the only ones who are in need of the Person and power of Christ. All around us are people who are lost, hurting, angry, bitter, worried, trapped in sin, with little or no hope, and the list goes on. What they need, and what everyone needs, is Christ! You and I, as believers, have the opportunity (and responsibility) to allow them to see Christ in us. They need to see in us His life, His love, His joy, His peace, His purity, His hope, His strength, His courage, His deliverance, His forgiveness, His compassion, and so forth.

So there may be a precious, even if very unpleasant, purpose to all of our trials. It may be that the Lord is allowing circumstances to bring us more to the end of ourselves so that our lives will be less about us and more about Christ. Just imagine how powerful our witness would be if Paul's words could be fully ours: *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live,*

Phoca PDF

but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20). What would happen in other people's lives if our lives were filled in such measure with Christ?

I encourage you to renew your devotion to Christ. Turn your focus toward Him and His glory and power. Trust Him and draw from His abundant resources. Abide in Him and let His Word dwell in your heart. Ask Him to fill every part of your being with His Spirit and to work in and through your life for His glory.

"But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place" (2 Cor. 2:14).

Phoca PDF