

God has promised those who will follow him: POWER! Like money, we can invest this power as we see fit. I would like to take a few minutes today to discuss how we may most effectively use this power in our lives as Christians.

First and foremost, the power that we receive from Christ must be invested in our feelings. Phillipians 4:13 tells us that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. This word 'strengthens' comes from the Greek word which means strengthened inwardly. It suggests strength of soul and purpose. This is what we must attain as Christians. Many times we suffer because we care. We may decide not to let something bother us because we want to be 'strong'. But we must never let our strength become cold and uncaring in practice. It takes a strong man to cry; a man strong in his love for others. The strongest man who ever lived wept at the passing of a loved one and the hurt it had caused others. Then he summoned his strength and raised Lazarus from the dead.

We must have powerful feelings. Too many people suppress their feelings until they cannot respond to others in need. Emotions are an important part of our natural makeup, and though they can be manipulated by a certain style of preacher, are essential to our recognition of the great gift of grace. We cannot simply eliminate this aspect of our lives, as some want to do, because it causes us to want to clap our hands and stomp our feet. Emotions can be explosive, as when we win the big game or when we are very angry. We get that feeling when we watch the heroic type of movie or read that type of book. I think that it is only natural that we also have that depth of feeling when we consider God's greatness and his part in the great battle between good and evil.

Inner strength and sensitivity are topics which I think need to be studied together. We have grown up in a society where to be strong, or tough, is synonymous with being callous and insensitive. But the attitudes which the Bible teaches us to instill in our lives indicate that we are to be supersensitive, handling other people's feelings as we would the delicate shell of an egg. Christ himself was at once the strongest and most sensitive person who ever lived. We must not ever be ashamed of being sensitive towards others. In Romans 12:15 we are instructed to 'rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep'. We are to be a loving, touching, sensitive family.

Closely associated with the idea of powerful feelings is the concept of powerful thoughts. One of the world's greatest philosophers and mathematicians Descartes, once made the statement: 'I think, therefore I am'. This has been given different meanings throughout history, but what I would like to emphasize is this: thought is intimately connected with life; thought gives life its meaning. The more we think, then, the more meaningful our lives will be. For the best life, we must think deeply!

The apostle Peter tells us in 1 Peter 1:13, 'Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind (KJV)', the word 'gird' here relating to the idea of being clothed, in particular in readiness for action or battle. We must, to put it very simply, THINK! We must use our brain in our Christian lives. Without it we are nothing. We can't just go around like a robot saying, 'I believe in God...I believe in God'. We must put meaning and feeling to the words, we must believe deep within our minds, not just on the surface. We must think about the word of God. We must believe deep in our minds, not just on the surface.

Augustine said something in his Confessions that I think is appropriate here: '(God is) ... power wedded to my mind and the depths of my thought'. The true power that we can obtain comes only from God! We can plug in for that power if we will open our minds and wills to him. There is nothing that can do more to expand our minds than to try to fit God in.

An important item to be mentioned before we get too far along is what Mid McKnight calls a 'mental image transformation'. This is simply the idea that what you are is very much related to the image which you have of yourself, and you can change yourself by changing that image. We can use our mind to alter our personality and character, and we must use it to reach for the perfect example that Christ gave us. If we have in our mind the image of Christ, then we can approach it in our lives. With the concepts that I hope to present in this book, I think that we can override our existing mental images of failing to attain this goal with the powerful idea that God's strength can enable us to do it.

Associated with powerful thoughts and feelings are powerful words. Man's early concept of words was that they had special power connected to them. Evidence of this are the 'magic words' used in many medieval works of literature. But the true source of powerful words is God, who wields the power of the universe in his words. Let us consult a few Scriptural examples. In Psalms 33.6,9 we read: 'By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of his mouth...For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood forth.' Psalms 46.6 reads, 'He utters his voice, the earth melts.' And then in Jeremiah 23.29, 'Is not my word like fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer which breaks the rock in pieces?'

After the death of a very close friend, I searched and searched for a word that could fully describe my fury and frustration, but I could not find one. Many 'curse' words rang through but none were strong enough to convey the intensity of my feelings. All were an attempt to exert power. I wanted a word that had enough power to make something 'pop!' I wanted a word which would make things happen explosively! But our words simply do not have that kind of power. It made me realize, though, that I wanted my total allegiance with the being that did have that kind of power.

Power in words does express itself in what has always been known as the 'Word of God'. Reading in Hebrews 4:12, 'For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword (KJV)'. Nothing can motivate man quite like it. It has the power to change lives, to turn them completely around. It is the simple message of Christ and the words of the Almighty God that are so powerful.

Finally, we should be concerned with powerful actions. It is funny, but when I was in high school, and saw someone that I wanted to impress, I felt an incredible urge to 'jump into action'. It didn't really matter what the action was; I just wanted to be in motion. Of course the more brave and daring the action, the better. If we could just be as interested in acting like God was watching, then we would do well. But many of us are in a similar situation when we feel the need to be doing something for the Lord, but we don't know exactly what to do. We must be able to distinguish between aimless motion and directed momentum.

The evidence of superstrength, the trademark of a 'Superhero', is his repertoire of powerful deeds. The power of these actions lies in their impact upon their surroundings, their ability to arrest attention and affect people. The very idea of power means that things are going to move, that situations are going to change! Powerful actions characterized many of the men in the Old Testament. In Hebrews 11 a list of heroes of the faith is given. Let us read from verses 32-34, 'And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets -- who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.' These 'swashbuckling' heroes were to point us again and again to the great working and saving power of God. So many popular stories of today were woven around the powerful deeds of the heroes involved. And we want to imitate those things, because we respect them and want to be just like them. The Christian may not be able to perform great miracles, but we must still put power into everything he does to fight evil and exert a strong positive influence.

There is an essential underlying theme which binds these ideas together. We must be able to translate the strength of our thought and feeling into powerful words and actions. It is great to study and be stimulated by wonderful philosophy and to feel surges of emotion when we read a sad story; but so many times we never relate these things to our actions and our relationship towards the people around us (see James 2:17). On the other hand, our actions don't mean a thing unless they are a response to our mind and heart (see 1 Corinthians 13:1-3). As John says in 1 John 3:18, 'Let us not love in word or in speech, but in deed and in truth'. The point of all of this is that each element of our power must be used consistently with each other element. And the only thing that can really prevent this from happening is our own will. Our will chokes off the channels associated with each element so that it has limited influence on the others. The person who seeks to follow Christ must submit to God's will so that his words, deeds, thoughts, and feelings will be those of Christ.