



Human v. Divine Power: Power Achieved in Weakness, 2 Cor 12:9-10, Utilized in the Advance of the Sophisticated Spiritual Life

6. The corporate marriage is made powerful in times of weakness. Weakness becomes the conduit through which power is increased in the life of the married couple that is advancing in the sophisticated spiritual life:

2 Corinthians 12:9 - The Lord has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power [δύναμις, *dunamis*: **divine omnipotence made available in each stage of spiritual adulthood**] is fully achieved [τελειόω, *teleioō*: **fully accomplished; fully realized; fully developed; fully achieved**] with weakness [ἐν ἄσθενείᾳ, *en astheneia*: **with undeserved suffering; see v. 10**]. Therefore, I will boast [καυχάομαι, *kauchaomai*: **to boast from a knowledge that undeserved suffering means the provision of divine power**] all the more gladly about my weaknesses in order that the power [*dunamis*] of Christ may reside [ἐπισκηνώω, *episkēnoō*: **to pitch a tent of power from which the believer can draw strength**] on me.

v. 10 - For this reason I find contentment in weaknesses, in slanders, in pressures, in persecutions, in stresses in behalf of Christ [**undeserved suffering**], for when I am weak, then I am powerful [*dunamis*].

7. This concept presents the secret to managing the trials that inevitably occur during the course of a lifetime relationship. If the couple stays together and grows spiritually together then they will be able to endure these trials and advance together. This stick-to-itiveness under pressure leads to accrued blessings culminating in a corporate escrow at the evaluation tribunal of Christ.
8. This passage summarizes the stages of the believer's advance through the sophisticated spiritual life and this subject is discussed in detail in:

Thieme, R. B., Jr. *Christian Suffering*. 3d ed. (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 2002), 66-67, 88-90:

"The power is achieved with weakness" (2 Corinthians 2:9) states that suffering is necessary for spiritual advance. The verb *teleō*, which is ambiguously translated "made perfect" in the King James Version, means "to finish, to accomplish, to fulfill, to achieve," the latter best agreeing with the context in verse 9.

How is power achieved? The Greek preposition (*en*) plus ἄσθενείᾳ (*astheneia*), in the instrumental case of manner, indicates the manner in which the action of the verb is carried out: "with weakness."

"Weakness" refers to the progressive phases of suffering for blessing. Weakness here is not failure or sin but helplessness. Suffering for blessing puts the spiritually adult believer in a situation he cannot resolve with human resources. He is helpless and must totally depend on divine assets that he has acquired by metabolizing Bible doctrine in his soul. The suffering itself does not advance the believer; his utilization of God's power in suffering is what advances him.

Power and weakness exist together at the same time: The adult believer uses the strength of spiritual self-esteem to move through his weakness in providential preventive suffering. He uses the strength of spiritual autonomy to go through his weakness in momentum testing. And he uses the strength of spiritual maturity to move through his weakness in evidence testing. He not only exercises the power inherent in each stage of spiritual adulthood to meet the test, but when he succeeds in passing each test, he "achieves the power" of the next stage of spiritual adulthood. With each test he passes, he moves up. (p. 66)

What degree of strength is required to endure providential preventive suffering? Spiritual self-esteem. What power is required to pass momentum testing? Spiritual autonomy. And what is needed to pass evidence testing? Spiritual maturity. (pp. 66-67)



As a result of dealing with the undeserved suffering that God sends, the believer's strength increases so that he is able to cope with the next increment of suffering when it comes. In His perfect wisdom God gives each believer the unique sequence of blessing and suffering, of prosperity and adversity, necessary to bring him to maximum glorification of God. (p. 67)

What is the "power" in this context, and what is the "weakness?" The power is divine omnipotence as it becomes available to the believer with each stage of spiritual adulthood. Omnipotence operates in the adult believer in the form of spiritual self-esteem, spiritual autonomy, or spiritual maturity.

The weakness is the suffering for blessing which God applies to the believer in each of these stages of spiritual achievement. God sends the weakness of providential preventive suffering, momentum testing, or evidence testing so man experiences the weakness in suffering that is beyond human solution. God provides the power ... which is employed by man in his helplessness and produces accelerated spiritual growth.

Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses in order that the power of Christ may reside in me. (2 Cor. 12:9b) (p. 88)

This is boasting not in the sense of glorifying self but as a manifestation of esprit de corps. Paul's boasting expresses his delight in belonging to God's ... plan. Such boasting indicates submission to God's system and is the antithesis of arrogance. Thus Paul demonstrates that providential preventive suffering has been effective in his life. Divine protection against arrogance succeeded because of his positive volition in the application of metabolized doctrine in his soul. Rather than being preoccupied with himself and his problems, Paul now focuses his attention on the person of Christ. (pp. 88-89)

- 12) Divine power is granted to every believer at the moment of salvation through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ, and God the Father. Their power is accessed by spiritual growth which advances to greater and greater levels of power with the inculcation of Bible doctrine.
- 13) As one advances spiritually he acquires biblical problem-solving devices that enable him to manage, resist, overcome, and ultimately conquer the challenges of life.
- 14) These challenges include undeserved suffering, i.e., providential preventive suffering (a preemptive action against arrogance), momentum testing (challenges from thought, people, systems, or disaster), and evidence testing (Lucifer's attempt to discredit mature believers through cross-examination utilizing one of two categories of testing: (1) the believer's relationship with God demonstrated by the Lord in Matthew 4:1-10 which He passed by applying the power of Bible doctrine, and (2) the believer's relationship to life in the example of Job in Job 1-2, 42:10-17.
- 15) In every case the victory is won not with human power but with divine power.
- 16) Thus in marriage the solution to the challenges encountered during a life-long relationship is to apply divine power rather than human power. (Ephesians 4:31-32)