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The Power That Worketh in Us

by T. Austin-Sparks

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Reading: Eph. 1:7-14; 3:14-21.

There is a phrase at the end of the third chapter of the letter to the Ephesians which I feel we are led to consider: "...the power that worketh in us". If you look back to verse 16 you find these words: "...that ye may be strengthened with power through his spirit in the inward man". There is a very great deal hanging upon that clause, "the power that worketh in us". It is something which is called upon to carry a very great responsibility; but, blessed be God, it is well able to carry it.

The connection, as we see from these passages to which we have referred, carries us into things eternal. Mark the phrase in verse 11: "According to the eternal purpose". Mention is made of Divine purpose more than once in this letter. Again, mark the words in verse 19: "...that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God". There you have some intimation of what that eternal purpose is. Then, as within that great compass, there is a great deal of need, a many-sided need. That need in its various aspects is touched upon in the two prayers of the Apostle; the need for the spirit of wisdom and revelation that we may know - and what things they are to be known! What immense things to be known! - and then in relation to that knowledge, that vast, wonderful, spiritual knowledge, which is the content of the eternal purpose, and in relation to all the fulness of God, one central need, namely, to be strengthened with might, not only to know, but to do. So we are led to what form the first words of chapter 4: "I... beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called". What a context! If we spent all the rest of our days, even though they were many, we should never

fathom these wonderful intimations, all that hangs upon this little phrase "the power that worketh in us". As we have said, it is well able to carry that burden.

Before going any further, I want to make this observation, that this power transcends all His other power. This is what is termed "the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe". It is the power that worketh in us. That "us" relates to a particular people, and there is a particular power related to that particular people, and that particular power is the *exceeding* greatness of His power, that which exceeds in greatness all His other workings of power. I think that must lie behind the superlative terms employed. It is a comparative term. "The exceeding greatness of his power" means that there are other expressions of His power, but this one is its exceeding greatness; and it is to us-ward who believe, it is the power which worketh in *us*.

Now that is a great statement, and it leaves us with much to think about, if it be true; and it is true: "...the power that worketh in us", which is, as we have seen, power through His Spirit in the inward man; and that is the power and the means by which God reaches His end in us. God has a great end in us, even that we should be conformed to the image of His Son: "foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son..." This is the means by which that end is reached in us. God is doing something in us by the exceeding greatness of His power, deeper than our senses, deeper than our recognition, than our perception. There is something there which God has done, and is doing, which is settled beyond the interference of all the fluctuations and variations of our more superficial life. We live so much in that superficial realm, in what we call our soul realm, where we register all the influences and sensations which come from without, where we react to all such influences and impacts, and where we have a world of our own feelings, our own consciousness; this terrible world which is so rarely quiet and calm for any length of time together. It is the realm where all the fret is, all the anxiety, the worry, the care, the forebodings, and everything that can make us believe that it is the most real and positive and solid and true world in God's universe.

When we are in a mood, that mood is the most real thing to us, and if any tell us it is only a mood, and not to be taken seriously, we have little patience with such people. To us it is the most real thing. We are passing through something that is in the realm of this natural, this human life, and while we are passing through, it is terribly real. Yes, it may have a physical basis, it may rise from some disorder; it may be anything in this natural life, and this natural life is a terribly real thing to us, and very often we are dangerously near believing that it is the most real and ultimate thing, and that with it we stand or fall. Now what I want to say is that that is not the deepest thing in the child of God. There may be physical disorder and mental derangement, and there may be all the most positive sensations of which this complex nature of ours can be conscious, but there is a deeper thing than that which is not touched, not moved. Right down in the depths of our being, if we are children of God, there is something which survives all that. You know that it has survived a thousand such moods and experiences. You have again and again thought that it was the end; that now you were going to be swamped and submerged, now the finish had come, through despair, melancholy, misery, or for some other reason, and you have survived that kind of thing again and again; you have come through, you have come out, you have come up. There is something there in a child of God which is deeper than that, more abiding, inviolable, a foundation of God unshaken. Any power that can survive what we sometimes have to go through in the realm of our own souls is a very great power indeed; and, believe me, this power that worketh in the Church is going to survive all the accumulated sensations of all the members of the Body of Christ.

Now bring all your misery together, bring all your despair together, all your sensations, all the helplessness of the outlook, and, if you are a child of God, there is a power that worketh within which is more than sufficient to meet and counter and triumph over all that. That is the means by which God reaches His end in us, and if His end in us is conformity to the image of His Son, then the power that worketh in us is more than enough to meet and overcome all that which is contrary to His Son in us. Do you believe that? Not always! If we really believed that in a thoroughgoing way we should never be found occupied with ourselves, we should never be depressed because of our imperfection, there would be no room for any question as to our standing. Oh, if we did but believe this, what triumphant people we should be; for is it not true that the greater proportion of our trouble, of our despair, of our unhappiness is due to the consciousness of our own imperfection, all that we are that we would not be and should not be, and all that we are not that we feel we ought to be. His eternal purpose and His exceeding great power are linked together. Do not forget that. We are the object, of both, and His exceeding great power is at work within us to effect the purpose.