***Triumph out of Trouble, No. 6 - PH18-02  
  
Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 1:12-14***

We are continuing with a side excursion from the book of Philippians. We're continuing to look at the Christian's experience of triumph in the times of trouble via 2 Corinthians 12:9-10. We've been examining the experience of the apostle Paul where, at one time, he was killed at the city of Lystra on a missionary tour. While he was dead, he had the experience of going into the third heaven into the presence of God, and then returning (being brought back to life) to continue his ministry with the knowledge of that information that he had received. However, he was given a demon which created a physical ailment which was a constant source of pain for Paul in order to remind him never to reveal what he had seen on that occasion. Paul was told that the pressures on him from this ailment were to be met by the grace of God which God was to supply to him. This was after three times he had begged the Lord to remove this pressure.

**Greater Grace**

The grace of God which is sufficient for such a severe trial is called greater grace in James 4:6. This greater grace is poured out upon some Christians. The particular Christians that we are told it is poured out upon are Christians which are described by the summary word "humble" in James 4:6. The genuinely humble Christian, in the biblical sense of that word, is such because he has done something within his soul; namely, he has built a structure of spiritual maturity by means of the sake of the Word of God. The Christian who is lacking this status of greater grace (abounding grace; overflowing grace; or, super grace) is the Christian who very often is very sure of himself. He's very opinionated, but he lacks spiritual good judgment. He is not all that he thinks he is. This spiritual maturity structure is, in effect, a container. It is a container which we build within our souls. You may envision it in the form of a cup. This container is built by various segments of Bible doctrine which we take in and go positive toward. We not only learn it, but we accept it, and begin acting upon it.

When the container has been built in our souls, God is then able to start pouring out His grace. He pours it into our lives until that container is filled. Then when the container is filled, He keeps pouring and it begins overflowing, and we have the condition which is described in Psalm 23:5, "My cup runs over." This is the condition that God was describing and of which God was reminding Paul that existed in Paul's soul which would enable him to meet every pressure of life; namely, the pressure of this physical ailment with which he suffered at the hands of a demonic spirit.

The super grace life is characterized by many capacities which are created in us, and blessings which, consequently, flow from those capacities. All of this amounts to great happiness and great peace. It is God's purpose in giving us His Word that we should be happy. 1 John 1:4 tells us that we have the Word of God given to us in order that God's primary purpose for us should be achieved. Which is what? That you should be happy. God is our host. He has invited us into his family and into his household, and as our host, He seeks to make us happy. If we are unhappy, it is an insult to the Lord. It is not a credit to Him. Therefore, He is interested in being able to pour His grace to an overflowing capacity and overflowing level within us. So, a lack of super grace capacity for life is something that many Christians are revealing today. They do not have capacity for living. They will reflect this by, consequently, their desire to interfere with other people's lives.

If you don't have the capacity for living (you're just existing), then you're the nosy kind of Christian who's pushing himself into interfering with other people's lives and other people's privacies. Until a believer enters this state, where his cup is overflowing and where he is in a super grace status, he cannot even serve God with maximum effectiveness and certainly he cannot cope in stride with the pressures and the trials and the situations of his life.

Every Christian, at any moment, is either super abounding and going on, or else the cup is drying up and you're retrogressing. You do not stand still in the Christian life. That's why 1 Corinthians 10:12 says when you get to this wonderful state, it is a very dangerous state. It is the most wonderful; the greatest; the fantastic; and, the most fulfilling status of life which a person can reach. This is the goal of the Christian life. The super grace life is a dangerous life, because, as of this point, one of the worst things can happen to you. That is that it is such a wonderful level of life to reach, that you lean back in the arms of God in complete rest, which is what you ought to do. However, then you are in a position where you can use this life against God. The very life of blessing can now be the basis from which you, instead of rewarding God (so to speak) with your gratitude and with your continuance, you begin to use this as a base for moving off away from the Lord. This is because you feel you have it made.

Progress toward the super grace life is often made in considerable degree by Christians who are in modest circumstances in life. You don't have a great deal of fame, and nobody much knows your name. You don't have too much dough. You have to work kind of hard; you don't have a lot of leisure time; and, you're in the circumstances of life that are comparatively modest. In that state, you're going on with the Lord. You're building your cup, and God is beginning to fill it up. Then you get to this super abounding status, and what happens? Very frequently, at this stage, a Christian reverses his direction. Instead of responding to God's blessings by going on, he responds to God's blessing by staying away from church services. Why?

Well, he's got enough money now. For example, he can buy himself a trailer. He can hook his car up and he's going to go places. Pretty soon, you dash out on Friday; you stay Saturday; and, you dash in late Saturday night, and there you are sitting in church on Sunday morning. You feel very good about this. You talk to your wife and say, "Wasn't that great? We went out Friday and Saturday, and here we are in church. It's beautiful. We're beautiful people. That's what we are. The Lord really loves us because we're here in church. Do you see what you have? You have a little gimmick. You did something, and you're very wonderful because you did something. You showed how devoted you are.

However, pretty soon, it has become so nice to be able to just pull off any place and go off into the woods. There you are sitting around, and you look up and you say, "You know, God is everywhere. Why don't we just stay and worship Him here on Sunday instead of going into that little crowded room there at Berean?" So pretty soon you have drifted off because God has prospered you with something, and you're using it against Him. This is because one of the things that comes with super grace status is economic prosperity. Sometimes, that economic prosperity is not just what you need, but it is more than you need. It is one of the signs of the super grace life that God is prospering you economically, as well as giving you many of those other satisfactions that we talked about in the last session.

So here's the problem. You begin neglecting the Word of God. You begin neglecting your own study of the Word of God. You used to spend a little time listening to audio recordings. You used to have the insight that if you had to drive someplace of any distance, you at least had the good sense to say, "Well, I'm going to listen to audio recordings, and I'm going to study the Word of God while I drive along for this stretch." Now you don't do that. Now you turn the radio on, and you listen to the religious radio station where you hear all that beautiful religious music. Your soul is inspired and moved. That's great, and it's nice to have it, but you might think that you're getting something from the Lord. Somebody has gotten up and said, "Let me tell you what I think of Jesus." It just moves your soul, and you say, "Oh, Lord, I just feel so close to You."

That's gimmickry. You're kidding yourself. If you're wise, you will not be listening to the radio. You'll be using the Word of God, and you'll be taking an opportunity. You used to, when you were poor, but now that you drive in your big fat limousine, you are no longer so modest that you listen to the Word of God. Or you don't show up for prayer meeting anymore. Things are getting too good. You have to hustle a little more because of the way God is prospering you.

**Super Grace**

Super grace is a very strange status. It's the most fantastic level of life which is what God has designed for you, but it is the place where Christians become monsters. When a man in the congregation has reached a super grace status, he is the kind of a man that you would like to have in an administrative capacity. So, he gets on the church board, and he turns into a monster. I've had my experiences in the hallowed halls of Berean Memorial Church of finding men who are great guys who got up and moved along in the Lord in the super grace kind of life. Then they got on a board, and they became monsters as they began getting carried away with their sense of importance and of the things they thought they should take over. Or you have a church worker who's a great help. Then he gets into super grace so you put him in positions of responsibility, and he turns into a pushy aggressive monster. Why do you do that? Because you forget how you got here. You've built a container through the Word of God, and then God poured in there, and you didn't have anything to do with it. All you did was accept what He has provided.

So, when your life starts moving along in a stable way, be careful you don't start neglecting your church life and your contact with the Lord, in favor of a social life. Or you start neglecting him because of a job that's prospering so good. Or you star neglecting Him because you have so much schoolwork that you have to do. When you do this, you start building calluses upon the facets of your soul. Then this stream of blessing begins to thin out, and it starts getting clamped off. What you do is just gradually gently, but very definitely, turn the handle and turn the spigot, and you shut off the grace of God flowing to you.

Happiness is a temptation to get friendly with the world and with sin. Sin is a pleasure because it satisfies the lust patterns of the old sin nature. When we get to the super grace, we are happy Christians. When we are happy, we have a way of getting friendly with the world instead of maintaining the guard that we did when we were in modest circumstances. Consequently, when we get into involvements with the world, we slip off into the world's points of view, and we begin to get disoriented from reality. That's the problem. Bible doctrine is reality. We get disoriented from reality. We begin to think that religious and political liberalism is an OK thing, and we don't see it for the grotesque thing that it is. We begin to have a spirit of anti-capitalism, and we are against big business--not realizing the vast prosperity that has come to the vast vast proportion of our people in this country because of business and the free enterprise system. We get so deluded from reality that we think that Russia today is no longer a hideous brutal concentration camp.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn wrote a book entitled The Gulag Archipelago 1918-1956, and the word archipelago is a play on words. It's an image in which he is describing from his own experiences and from his examination and explorations through the experiences of other people. He is describing how Russia is a sea dotted with islands of prison camps. We have some asinine Americans today who think that the Stalin type of prison concentration camp and brutality doesn't exist in Russia today.

Now you have to remember that every time our secretary of state smiles into the face of Russian leaders in the Kremlin, he is smiling into the faces of the most brutal men whose fingers are dripping with the blood of millions of people and of many close associates because that's how they got to that position that they're in. Solzhenitsyn created havoc in Russia. The Wall Street Journal made quite an article about this. I will read you a paragraph from it:

"Once more, Alexander Solzhenitsyn has emerged from the shadows in which the Russian rulers would like to hide him. Once more, he appears before the Western world as a witness of dark horrors behind the facade of Russia--a facade which once so enchanted the intellectuals of this same Western world. He speaks not as a novelist, but as a historian, or perhaps more accurately as a chronicler of the stuff of history--an account of his own experiences in Russian prison camps and those of other prisoners gathered from letters or personal accounts. Alexander Solzhenitsyn is indeed witness to the brutalities of (Russia). For that he justly deserves his praise as a man of truth and courage"

So this is the idea when you get detached from reality. Super grace people are not fools like that. They look upon this and they see Russia as one great smooth sea with islands of brutal prison camps all over, and I mean millions of people. This as a testimony demands love for freedom that these people who have grown up under the system have to be held in a police control and squelched or they would break loose from the system immediately. They think that detente spells peace and security for the United States. Lack of reality leads us to think that if we have crash programs in order to clean up our environment, we will do a good thing. Instead, it led to an energy crisis. Do you know who is behind the disengagement that you've heard about that our Secretary of State has achieved? It was Russia, because Russia wants to open the Suez Canal. Russia wants to widen and deepen it so that her ships can have free access to the Indian Ocean. Who has won in this operation? The Russians have won again. Our press and our liberals are going to praise this wonderful thing that our secretary of state accomplished. All the boys in the Kremlin are shaking hands and yelling, "Break out another bottle of vodka. We did it again." It was a strategic military asset for the conquest and control of the world. So don't be so excited about what the secretary of state has accomplished.

Super grace Christians understand that kind of unreality. The charismatic experiences are supposedly from God. When you're a super grace Christian, you know that it is from Satan or from your own psychological inversions. You are calling the old sin nature work as the Lord's work when you are in unreality. You have loyalties to false objects. A super grace Christian is never loyal to the wrong church; to the wrong pastor; to the wrong people; or, to the wrong efforts. Many an unbeliever has better spiritual good judgment, I'm sorry to say, than a lot of Christians do. This is because unbelievers have a certain sense of loyalty by good judgment that even Christians who go spiritually insane no longer have. We have the impression that supplying our communist enemies with food and technology is good business. The communists can't feed their people, so we send them food. You know what happened to the price of food in this country because of our great wheat deal.

Now we are teaching them space technology. The Russians now have a space station. They killed three men doing it, and in one of the efforts they've had three major disaster failures. Therefore, they have decided that what they should do is cooperate with the Americans and hook up out in space. So they came to Houston, and we explained to them how to put out a space station. They're saying, "I see." They go back to Russia they say, "Break out another bottle of vodka. We've done it again." They're celebrating because they're getting the space technology they need. They're getting the industrial help. Ford Motor Company has a plant over there.

American businessmen are hustling to see how much they can help in the energy problem. Russia is getting an energy problem. She told her satellites, "We are no longer going to supply you with fuel oil. You'll have to get it on your own." However, she has vast resources out in Siberia. She has never been able to develop the technology to get it. Guess how she got it. They made a deal with the Americans to go over there; to explore the Siberian fields; and, to bring in the oil because of the technology we have advanced in our Alaska Arctic fields. Therefore, guess what they're saying in the Kremlin? "Break out another bottle of vodka. We've done it again." It's just one celebration after another. "The Americans came over and showed us how to get this oil in." When they got it flowing and coming in really good, of course, it was under the guise that for so many years, the United States was going to get a certain amount of oil from Russia. However, all you need is one declaration of war, and you turn the spigot, and off goes the flow of oil. Well, Lenin put it very well. Lenin finally said, "Comrades, I'm going to sum up our program to you relative to the capitalist mentality. The capitalists will sell us the rope with which we will hang them." We have sold them the rope.

**Unreality**

Well, the Lord is not impressed with any kind of unreality such as this represents, and we could go on and on and on. Most Christians live an abnormal spiritual life. Do you know who thinks you're a fool when you talk like this? All the grimy little Christians who are groveling around down here in the dirt, and they have a worm's view of life. Consequently, they don't understand what you're even talking about. When you talk about super abounding greater grace and the consequences of reality, they think you're very disoriented to life. They don't know that what you are is right on the beam, and they're way off. Therefore, they think you're some kind of an ignoramus. The Lord knows that the people who are the salt of the earth are the super grace Christians, and that's why He has given us His Word, and the reality that comes through it.

So what the apostle Paul says concerning the grace of God is that when he pled with the Lord to remove all this from him, the Lord finally said, "My grace is sufficient for you." God's grace is the sum total of all that He is. What He's doing for us represents His very essence. The sovereignty of God controls all of our suffering. The righteousness of God does only what is right toward us in our tribulation. The justice of God treats us fairly in our sufferings. The love of God is His motivation toward us in our suffering. Eternal life causes God to deal with us in our trials as those who are eternal members of His family. God's omissions knows everything we go through. God's omnipotence is His divine power that's always there to carry us through. God's omnipresence means His presence in our deepest trial. God's immutability means that His grace will never change. It will always be there to pour out. God's veracity means he tells us the truth concerning how to meet our sufferings. The grace of God is the essence of God. Nothing of what God does for us is what we deserve. We either have this sufficiency of grace (we have normal grace) or we have maximum sufficiency of the greater grace which the spiritual maturity structure can give us. God can pour into us all we need to meet every trial.

So, the super great sufficiency which we have and our spiritual maturity structure make you a Christian who is finally coming to rest. The word "sufficient" was "arkeo. This is present active indicative. Present means that it's always sufficient. Active means that God is putting it out. Indicative means a statement of fact. This word "sufficient" means "contentment." "My grace is sufficient to make you content." It is all you need to carry you through this reminder suffering that you are experiencing. Now, why is this true? It is true because Paul had built a cup of spiritual maturity in his soul.

**Grace**

He says, "My grace is sufficient for you." "For you means that it is the provision of the grace of God expressly and specifically for the believer. He says, "For my strength is made perfect in weakness." This sufficiency is dependent upon *My* strength. This is the word "dunamis" from which we get the English word "dynamite." This is the inherent power of God--the power represented in the spiritual maturity structure of the soul. The inherent power of God represented by the spiritual maturity structure is made perfect." The "for" introduces the reason for this sufficiency that God has provided--so that we would be made perfect. The word "perfect" is "teleo," and it means here that it is brought to a state of complete fulfillment. It does not mean actual perfection. It means "to fulfillment." "My grace is brought to a fulfillment in your experience." It is present: God's power is constantly operating at maximum effectiveness in our situation of trial. This is a passive voice. This means that man's extremity is God's opportunity, and it is a declaration of fact.

The power of God is always there for our sufferings. So God says that His strength and His capacity is made perfect (is brought to perfection) in weakness. The Greek word for "in weakness" is "en asthenia." "Asthenia" is "weakness" or "helplessness" in the face of some situation. The word "en" means "by means of" weakness, suffering, and helplessness. The power of the old sin nature or human ability--none of these can carry us through. But this is the weakness that is in us: our old sin nature; our human capacities; and, our delusions. What he is saying is, "When you are at your lowest point, that's when I, in My capacities as God, can be at the greatest point in your behalf."

Now what is Paul's response then? Paul has finally caught on to something. When he hears the Lord say this, after asking him three times, God says, "My grace is sufficient for you. For My strength is made perfect in weakness. What I as God can do has its maximum expression when you are in your greatest suffering. Paul finally catches on. He has built within himself the responses that he needs to meet his suffering. So he says, "Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities." "Most gladly" is a rather peculiar grammatical construction. "Most gladly," first of all, is the adverb "hedista" which means very gladly. It's what we call the superlative state of the adverb. It is "very gladly."

Then it's followed by what we call the comparative adverb. Remember that there is the simple, comparative, and superlative state of an adverb--great; greater; and, greatest. This first one here is the superlative: "most gladly." Then it is followed by a comparative: rather ("mallon"). That means "rather." So we have "very gladly rather." This is the Greek's way of stressing very emphatically that Paul says, "Wait a minute. What am I talking about? It is *my weakness* which is my greatest asset. This is my greatest moment. This is the most valuable thing I have. That weakness is always there. Even when the cup is there and it's overflowing, our weakness is still there. That's what I meant earlier. Don't get to the super grace life and then forget your weakness. You'll begin going backwards the minute you do that.

So he says, "Very gladly rather (the highest degree of boasting) will I glory." The word "glory" is "kauchaomai" that we've had several times. This is a biblical principle: as personal helplessness mounts, the tide of divine strength rises in our behalf. It is the future tense. Anytime in the future that Paul faces suffering, he's going to respond gladly. Middle voice means he will be benefited by that kind of a response. Indicative is a statement of fact which glorifies Jesus Christ. What will he glory in? He says he will glory in what he calls his "infirmities." "Astheneia" is the Greek word. "Astheneia" is simply the same word we've been having for "weakness." Here it means in the sphere of his helplessness.

So he says, "Most gladly, therefore, I will rather glory in my infirmities." For what reason? That the power of Christ may rest upon me. The power of Christ is introduced by the little "hina," which indicates purpose. Then we have again "dunamis," the inherent power of God. The power of Christ will find its maximum expression. It does that when we have this spiritual maturity structure functioning under the filling of the Holy Spirit. Then there is a very important word. "That the power of Christ may *rest*." Here is the strategic word "episkenoo." "Episkenoo" means "to pitch a tent upon." Paul envisions the power of Christ in the form of the spiritual maturity structure provided by the grace of God covering him in his weakness and suffering.

**"Shekhinah" Glory**

Now this is a word that is tied back to the Old Testament where the "Shekhinah" glory of God covered as a tent the people of the Lord. This "Shekhinah" glory covered the Old Testament tabernacle where they worshipped the Lord, and the "Shekhinah" glory went into the tabernacle and filled it. It was the presence of God. Therefore, the spiritual maturity structure of the soul that a Christian can build with doctrine is the glory of God within his soul. It is the tent of God's care and blessing. It is the tent of God's glory which surrounds that believer to sustain him in his trial; in his weakness; in his frustration; and, in his helplessness. You remember that God's presence in Israel was indicated by this cloud of glory which surrounded the tabernacle like a thunderhead through which the lightning was flashing (Exodus 40:34). This cloud of glory was called the "Shekhinah" which meant "the dwelling of God's presence".

The "Shekhinah" glory cloud first appeared when Israel was escaping out of Egypt. It protected them from their pursuers (Exodus 13:21, Exodus 14:19). The "Shekhinah" cloud covered the mountain at Sinai when the law was being given (Exodus 24:16-18). It was the "Shekhinah" glory of God in the form of a cloud that guided them through their wilderness wanderings (Exodus 40:36-38). It was the "Shekhinah" glory that filled the tabernacle, and later the temple, dwelling in the Holy of Holies, representing the very presence of God (Exodus 40:34-36, 1 Kings 8:11, 2 Chronicles 7:1). The prophet Ezekiel spoke about a vision in which he saw the "Shekhinah" glory leaving the temple because of sin: how, with regret, he saw the presence of God leaving the Jewish temple (Ezekiel 10:18).

Today, the temple that God has is you, the believer's body. Within you, there is the very glory of God residing. The "Shekhinah" glory no longer resides in a building as it did in the Old Testament. It now lives in you. How? In the form of the spiritual maturity structure of the soul. This is what is demonstrated here in this passage as we are going to see in verse 10 in just a moment. So Paul says, "Most gladly rather (therefore) will I boast in my weakness, in order that the power of Christ (like the "Shekhinah" glory in the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle) may pitch a tent upon me and reside in me, working in me and giving me help.

So Paul says, "Yes, I will glory in my weakness because it frees the glory of God which is in me to work in my behalf, which I've been restricting and squelching by going to you, Lord, and saying, 'Lord, please take this suffering away. Please take this suffering away.' Finally, I realized You have given me the capacity to meet this suffering because this suffering has a purpose in my life." Here's the punch line: In verse 10, Paul says, "Therefore." This expresses his attitude now, and the word "therefore" can be translated "wherefore" or "on which account" he is now expressing a certain conclusion: his joy over his sufferings (which seems insane and is not natural); and, his joy over his weaknesses and his trials because of the limitless power of grace that's available to him, and because of the power of God which is released *only* when he is helpless.

He says, "Wherefore, I take pleasure in infirmities." The word for "take pleasure" is "eudokeo." This is present--constantly. It is active--he by choice does it. It is indicative--statement of fact. This is the same word which is used by God the Father about His son at the baptism of Jesus Christ in Luke 3:22. It expresses Paul's happiness in something which his enemies and his adverse circumstances have set in motion for his blessing. This is his delight in something within himself. It is his delight in what God has built in the way of his spiritual maturity structure. He is thinking divine viewpoint of Bible doctrine in his suffering instead of praying for release from it.

He says, "I will take pleasure in my infirmities." He says, "I will take pleasure (specifically, I'm going to glory) in five things," which is rather strange, and here they are. He says, "I'm going to glory in infirmities, which means weaknesses; in reproaches, which means insults; in necessities; in persecutions; and, distresses (or pressures). Why is he going to take delight in things like this? Who wants to find happiness in weakness; insults; necessities; persecutions; and, pressures? There's a reason for it. He says I am going to take pleasure in this thing. Let's take these things one at a time that he says I'm going to take pleasure in. This represents the "Shekhinah" of glory of God within his soul. This represents the presence of God that lives with you and is ready to function if you will just open the door and let it start pouring out of you.

**Glory in Troubles**

1. First of all, he says I will glory in **infirmities**. The Greek word is "astheneia." This is a suffering which is met by the grace orientation facet of spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity has five basic facets to it. Here in verse 10, Paul mentions all five facets as the things that will enable him to meet suffering. What we're saying is, how do I meet trials? By building spiritual maturity--not by some program of gimmicks; not a do it yourself operation; and, not some personality game that you play with which God is not impressed. However, here is something the Lord builds within us. He gives first of all this word "infirmities" which means an inner poverty or a lack of capacity. Impotence is the idea so that a person is helpless. It is the fact of our human weakness that makes it necessary for God's grace to come in and do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Paul says I am going to glory in my impotence; my infirmities; and, my helplessness because then God's grace can operate for me. If I operate in my human capacities, that's legalism.
2. Then he says, "I will rejoice in **reproaches**. This is the second side of the pentagon, "hubris." This is a suffering which is met by the facet of a relaxed mental attitude. This word connotes insulting mockery. "I will rejoice in insulting mockery." The verb form is used in 1 Thessalonians 2:2 of the insults that Paul and Silas received in Philippi. There it is translated "shamefully treated." This means in "an arrogant and spiteful manner." This is a condition in which it is tempting for us to respond with revenge and hatred when we are treated with this kind of shameful insult. We find ourselves a victim of somebody's arrogance; somebody's insolence; somebody's slander; somebody's insult; or, somebody's invasion of our privacy. If we do not meet it with a relaxed mental attitude, we respond with mental attitude sins. You may perform a Christian service as unto the Lord. You know what you're doing, and the Lord is guiding you, and someone through jealousy; envy; dislike; or, competition puts you down. These all challenge our relaxed mental attitude. Paul says, "Anytime I get insults, I'm going to say' Thank you, Lord.' It gives me a chance to use my relaxed mental attitude facet, and I can meet it with that."
3. I rejoice in **necessities**. The word necessities is "anagke." This is a suffering which is met with a mastery of the details of life. This is a word which connotes a situation of pressures arising from a need that you have. All of these you may study in in other sessions, but I know that most of you are well acquainted with it, so I want to show you how it connects together. These things that Paul says he will rejoice in connects to that very thing that is our primary business as believers to be constructing in ourselves. A mastery of the details of life means knowing how to live not only when you're poor, but also how to live when you are prosperous. It brings out new plateaus of strength in the believer, or it brings out new lows of cheapness when you are struck with these kinds of necessities--things you need in life, and you lack them. The apostle Paul gave us in a few places the list of the things that he needed, and how often he lacked what he needed, and yet he used this and he met this with the mastery of the details of life.
4. He said I will also rejoice in **persecutions**. The word is "diogmos." "Diogmos" is met with the facet of the capacity of love. The word basically refers to "persecution in a religious sense." It is divine love for your enemies; for your detractors; for your rejectors; or, for the legalists. It's being mistreated for well-doing when you're in full obedience to the Lord. It's the cruelty of Christians who are of the non-doctrinal, negative, catty type. There are no people as mean as non-doctrinal negative Christians. They're the meanest lot in the world. If you have the choice between a non-doctrinal negative catty Christian and a good high living unbeliever, take the high living unbeliever every time. He has a sense of personal decency and of niceness that this kind of Christian does not have. However, when you come up against one (that kind of persecution), your capacity for love enables you to override even what that individual is doing.
5. Finally, he says I will rejoice in **distresses**. The word is "stenochoria," and we meet this suffering with the facet of inner happiness. This word means "inner and outer tribulation" which strikes a person and robs him of his peace; that is, of his happiness. It connotes being squeezed into a suffering of some kind so that you suffer a loss--the pressure of people; circumstances; and, anguish. Paul is under pressure here for the Lord's sake. He says, "When I get under that kind of pressure and when I get under that kind of tribulation, I'm going to rejoice because it gives the grace of God an opportunity through my spiritual maturity structure to work."

All five of these areas, he says, are on the Lord's accounts. So verse 10 says, "Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities; in reproaches; in necessities; in persecutions; and, distresses for Christ's sake. Then he gives the summary of the whole thing--the punchline of it all. Why does he do this? He covers five major distressing experiences. Well, the "Shekhinah" glory of God is in his soul. It is in his soul in the form of the spiritual maturity where doctrine is built. Here is the principle that he has been referring to. "For when I am weak, then am I strong." The word "when" is "hton," and it means "whenever--on any occasion, some definite point in the future." It means, "On the occasion when I am weak." There is "astheneo" again. This is the verb form. It is present which means a constant point in the future--a constant point, anytime along the line of my life that I am under pressure. Active means that I actively possess this weakness.

However, it's subjunctive which means that it is potential. I am not always under pressure, but at any point that I am under the pressure, whenever, at that particular point that I am down; beaten; stomped upon; under trial; or, under suffering, then ("tote") am I strong. The word "tote" means at that moment; at that point only; and, at that particular place. When I'm at my lowest and when I'm under my hardest greatest pressure, then am I the strongest. How can you say that? Strong is "dunatos." How can he say that's when I am strong? Well the reason he can say it is because when he is weak, then the grace of God which is there ready to be poured out, because he has a capacity built with that spiritual maturity structure, can pour itself out. He has ability, and that's what the word "strong" here means. "Then have I ability," and the ability is not himself. The ability is what the Lord has put in.

Therefore, brethren, learn doctrine, and go to it, building the spiritual maturity structure within your soul. The Bible tells us there is no testing or pressure so great that we cannot meet it (1 Corinthians 10:13). God has made every provision to enable you to bear up under the worst situation that you meet in your life (2 Corinthians 12:9). The Lord Jesus Christ is the key to it all. His Word opens the door to the fullness of His grace to sustain us. I challenge you to go for the super grace life. That's where it's really all at.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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