

# MUCHNESS

I stopped wrestling the boys when they got strong enough to 'whup' me. Alas, that was a humbling day; but I still have the blessed memories of playing around on the living room floor – Mike and Johnny on my back, Gabe underneath – all three trying to take down the 'man of steel' – ha! Those were the days when they thought no one was as strong as Dad, and Dad kinda liked that you know.

In heaven, gathered around the Lamb, Jesus Christ, we will worship Him, proclaiming His worthiness to receive strength (see Rev 5:12). In an earlier study, we considered His worthiness to receive power. Yet, as similar as they may seem, they are really quite distinct from one another. Power is that which is inherent, like when Jesus spoke to the wind and waves of the sea to be still and they obeyed. Or, when He called out, "Lazarus! Come forth!" and he who had been in the tomb dead for four days arose.

But this strength is different. The words for it in Greek and Hebrew, we can connect by way of Christ's own declaration, "...you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your **strength**. This is the first commandment." (Mark 12:30) You see, this first commandment is found in Deut 6:5 where the word strength is translated in the KJV as "might". Each word has a fascinating contribution to make to our overall understanding of this attribute.

Now, if indeed you and I are among those praising and worshipping the Lamb as described in Revelation chapter five (and I do think we will be), we certainly don't want to be worship 'nerds' if you would. That is, if we're saying, "Worthy is the Lamb to receive...(among other things)

strength..." we'll be much more sincere by clearly understanding why, right? So let's consider this attribute, strength.

In the Hebrew, the word for this kind of strength is pronounced "meh-ode'" and is used primarily as an adverb meaning "exceedingly" or "much". Its noun though means "muchness". Its first mention is in the first chapter of the Bible – "Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was **very good**." (Gen 1:31) Perhaps a better translation would read, "**exceedingly good**". It is used in both a positive and negative sense though. In Genesis chapter four it says, "*but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was **very angry**, and his countenance fell.*"

In Exodus 19, while the Hebrew people waited at the base of Mount Sinai, the day of God's arrival, the third day, came and, "*Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked **greatly**. And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and **louder**, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice.*" (Ex 19:18,19) Here, meh-ode' is translated as both greatly and louder but the sense is the same – exceeding much.

In heaven Christ is declared worthy of this 'muchness'. Why? Consider His life, ministry and words: "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone: but if it dies, it brings forth **much fruit**.*" (John 12:24) Jesus did exactly that – He fell into the ground so to speak and died, but His death and resurrection birthed the church. He brought forth muchness, that is, much fruit. In fact, in Revelation, the number is said to be more than 100 million souls just around the throne.

Jesus also said, "*Herein is my Father gloried, that you bear **much fruit**...*" (John 15:8) And He practiced what He preached – He bore much fruit to His Father's glory. So indeed, He is worthy of 'muchness' in heaven – indeed, He has inherited ALL THINGS (see Mat 11:27, Luk 10:22, John 3:35, John 17:3, John 16:15) but that's not the whole story.

This strength in the Greek has another 'flavor' so to speak. It is pronounced "ischys" and though it means ability, force, strength or might, it is derived from the word meaning to keep or hold in the hand and is used of those joined to any one by say marriage or friendship. This, of course, fits perfectly with our Savior for this then is the **strength to hold both to the Father (as being perfectly obedient to and indeed one with Him) and to us who are saved (as His friends and bride)**. Recall, He said:

- "*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; **neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand**. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and **no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand**. I and My Father are **one**." (John 10:27-30) and...*
- "*No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you **friends**, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.*" (John 15:15) and...
- "*I and my Father are **one**." (John 10:30) and...*
- "*Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, **keep through Your name those whom You have given Me**, that they may be **one** as We are. While I was with*

*them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.*" (John 17:11,12) and...

- "*I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be **one**, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be **one in Us**, that the world may believe that You sent Me.*" (John 17:20,21)

And pointing to our bridal relationship with Jesus, the Apostle Paul wrote:

- "*For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.*" (See Eph 5:23 – 32)

Now, with this all in mind, we can better understand His worthiness and as a consequence worship accordingly, but there is also application for us here and now. You see, as with His power and riches and wisdom, so with His muchness or strength – He desires to share it with us who believe in Him for the scriptures use this same word when they tell us:

- "*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His (ischys) **might**.*" (Eph 6:10) and...
- "*If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the (ischys) **ability** which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ...*" (1 Pet 4:11)

In this life, our strength for holding on and our ministry are only genuine and effective when supplied by God. The same was true for Jesus and the apostles. Let me illustrate that with a story.

*Barnabas was such an eloquent speaker and preached with such passion and convincing doctrine that he was the chosen speaker over Paul*

on their first missionary journey. However, when God began to bring Paul to the forefront, Barnabas the encourager took the lesser place without complaint. He was not worried about position as much as seeing the call of God fulfilled in Paul's life.

John Mark, Barnabas' nephew, had deserted Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey when things looked like they were getting rough, but he repented and asked to go along with them on their second journey to the north. Paul refused to let him come along because of his earlier desertion, but Barnabas stuck with John Mark much as he had stuck with Paul before the brethren in Jerusalem years earlier.

Thus Barnabas and Paul went separate ways. Paul took Silas and headed to Syria and Cilicia, and Barnabas and John Mark went to Cyprus. Barnabas eventually encouraged John Mark to travel with Peter.

Being originally from Cyprus, Barnabas stayed on there preaching Christ to all who came across his path. Such a following rose up that he fell into contention with a Jewish sorcerer who was losing business because the things Barnabas taught freed the people from their fear of him and what his "magic" could do to them. Because of this, the sorcerer stirred the non-Christians of the city against Barnabas. They soon falsely accused Barnabas of some crime and had him thrown into prison.

When a time was set for Barnabas to come before a judge in Salamina, fearing the judge would discover his innocence and release him, a mob led by the sorcerer raided the jail, put a rope around Barnabas' neck, dragged him outside the city, and burned him.

Barnabas was not swayed by the

views of the mainstream. (He had ischys!) When everyone else flowed idly with the currents of fear or popular opinion, he took his paddle in hand and fought hard to get their boat back into God's flow of love and acceptance, even if he was the only one paddling. He judged people by the confessions of their hearts and how they lined up with the Word of God, not by their pasts or what they looked like. Where others saw a lost cause or an enemy, Barnabas (because of God's ischys!) saw great potential and a brother or sister in the Lord that needed the support of an encourager. He stood by those others rejected, and by doing so he helped them to realize greater things in their own lives than he did in his own.

In a world where self-promotion seems to be a key to success, there are not too many like Barnabas.

*(Jesus Freaks Vol II by DC Talk - parentheses mine)*

Most people aren't strengthened with this "ischys" and don't realize this "meh-ode". That's because it's not the strength of the world and its muchness may only be seen in heaven. Nevertheless, it's available to you as a believer; just ask for it in faith. It's God's good pleasure to give it to you.

Finally, as a believer God's got you in His hands, and He knows how to hold on to you. Paul put it this way – "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 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 8:38,39)

So now you know what this strength is all about, why Jesus is perfectly worthy of it and what He has chosen to do with it.