

Be Strong

God often tells people in the Bible to be strong. So what does this mean? In the physical real we know that being strong refers to exertion of power or force or the ability to accomplish a task or to withstand an opposing force. But the Bible is speaking of personal, emotional, mental, and spiritual ability. The focus is on doing something or overcoming something. It is not self-made power but a strength that comes from dependence on God through faith.

This is a theme also found throughout the Old Testament. As the fleeing Hebrews were confronted by a sea before them and a pursuing army behind them, they were terrified and cried out in despair to Moses. Moses said to the people, *“Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. ¹⁴ The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent”* (Exo. 14:13-14).

When they had crossed over to the other side the people burst out in jubilant song. *Yahweh is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him* (Exodus 15:2).

God's Word to Joshua some forty years later as he faced the enemies in Canaan was, *“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”* (Joshua 1:9).

The prophet Isaiah adds his prophetic encouragement to God's people.

He gives power to the faint,

and to him who has no might he increases strength.

³⁰ *Even youths shall faint and be weary,*

and young men shall fall exhausted;

³¹ *but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength;*

they shall mount up with wings like eagles;

*they shall run and not be weary;
they shall walk and not faint.* Isaiah 40:29-31

Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.
Isaiah 41:10

David in the psalms tells where his strength came from.
*Yahweh is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? Yahweh is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.* Psalm 27:1, Psalm 73:26

When we turn to the New Testament, we find that Christians are often told in Scripture to “be strong in the Lord.”

Paul relates God’s command to his people, “Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong.” 1 Corinthians 16:13
God’s call to his soldiers is, “Be strong in the LORD and in his mighty power” (Eph. 6:10).

As Christians we are to be men and women of strength. But this is not a mere physical or even intellectual strength. It is a spiritual strength that resides not in ourselves but in the LORD Himself. We need to be strong because of the power of evil in this fallen world. But we cannot depend upon the natural strength of men. What we need is the supernatural strength of God. This is the only kind of strength that can enable us to stand victoriously against the forces of evil.

If we are to be strong in the LORD we must realize our own strength is weakness. Our need is the divine strength, the mighty power of the strength of the LORD. Only his strength can cause us to overcome our spiritual foes.

We are to ***be strong in the LORD***. The LORD God almighty is strong. He is mighty. His very name is strength and refuge. “The Name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous into it and are safe” (Prov. 18:10).

What the apostle is urging us to do is to look to the LORD and to His power. This means we must remember the might of his power and think about it. Three of the greatest examples of His might are, first of all, the creation of this universe out of nothing by the word of his mouth. He spoke and it came into being.

Secondly, God delivered the Hebrew nation from the bondage of Egypt by His outstretched arm. This was especially manifested in His parting of the Red Sea and sending forth his people on dry ground. He then drowned the army of the pursuing enemy in the returning waters.

Moses led Israel in singing the victory of the LORD, "I will sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea. The LORD is my strength and my song. He has become my salvation...your right hand, O LORD, was majestic in power" (Exo. 15:1-2,6).

By far the greatest demonstration of the power of God was in the raising of Christ Jesus from the dead to a bodied existence of endless life, and he raised him up to the heavens. This is the same power he realized in our behalf when he saved us. "That power is like the working of His strength which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule, authority, power, and dominion" (Eph. 1:19-21).

We need to remember and meditate on Him and all the reserves of strength and power that are in Him. Also we are to realize that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Captain of our Salvation. He is the file leader of God's combat troops on earth. He leads us into spiritual battle, and he fights alongside us and indeed fights through us. Actually, the battles we fight are the LORD's and He will win the victory.

It is of immense importance that we understand where our strength comes from...it comes from God, and we must by faith take the strength of the LORD to ourselves. In other words, we must recognize our position in Christ. We have

been identified with him and he with us. Knowing who and what we are in Christ Jesus, we must act accordingly.

Christ Jesus is the Victor over sin, the devil, and death. We are co-victors with him. Our strength is not at the side of the LORD but in the LORD. It is our union with Jesus and our identification in His work of conquering the evil one and his work that is the source of our spiritual strength. To translate this into practice in our lives we must yield to the presence of the LORD and his working in our lives. This we do not do alone but in the company of Christ's people- the church. Being a part of an assembly of God's people where the Word of God is expounded, and people lift one another up in prayer and sharing imparts to us a collective strength. Together our eyes must be fixed upon Him who is the strength of Israel. Remember that as God's child you are never alone, for He walks with you and lives within you. Be strong in the LORD and in the power of His might.

"We rest on Thee – our Shield and our Defender;
We go not forth alone against the foe;
Strong in thy strength, safe in Thy keeping tender;
We rest in Thee and in Thy Name we go."

-Edith Cherry

God, who shows you his kindness and who has called you through Messiah **Yeshua** , Christ Jesus, to his eternal glory, will restore you, strengthen you, make you strong, and support you as you face the struggles within and without. Look to Him. Be strong in the Lord and in his great might!

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