

JUNE 2004

## THE LORD OUR STRENGTH

*“Look to Yahweh and his strength; seek his face always.” Psalm 105:4*

Strength, to be strong, to be strengthened, all Christians are familiar with these concepts for they are found all throughout the Bible both OT and NT, but how many of us truly believe them? How many of us actually look to God to strengthen us in our lives? How many of us live the faith-rest life looking to God and depending upon God for his strength to live our lives and do all the things that we have to do?

Sad to say for most Christians this would be just a part of their doctrinal statement, something they believe to be true, but not a daily active dynamic in their life. Yet it's still there all the way through the Bible that God strengthened his people to victoriously face the enemy, to go through a difficult situation successfully, to run kingdoms, to bear their children, to run their businesses, even the impossible event of bearing children when it was physically impossible for them to do so! *“By faith, Abraham, even though he was past age- and Sarah herself was barren- was enabled (strengthened) to become a father because he considered him faithful who made the promise.” Hebrews 11:11* *“Whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies.” Hebrews 11:34b*

When the Bible says, “God is our strength”, is that to us just a nice little saying that sounds good in a religious context, or is it our hope, our life, something we believe, look to and where we actively go to him to be strengthened for whatever it is that we need? Can we not see that Paul's statement of, *“I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me”*, or more accurately, *“I am strong for all things through Christ who in-strengthens me”*, is the exact same concept found all throughout the OT?

It was Christ who strengthened David; it was Christ who parted the Red Sea; it was Christ who empowered Abraham to have children! It is the Jesus Christ of the NT who was the Yahweh Elohim of the OT, **and as he strengthened his OT people thousands of years ago, he is still strengthening his people today!** The question is, “Are we living our lives in his strength?” Are we looking to and depending on him to: strengthen us, to raise our children, pay our bills, run our businesses and every other facet of our existence here on earth?

Jesus Christ appeared to Daniel and strengthened him by his words, *“Again the one who looked like a man touched me and gave me strength. ‘Do not be afraid, O man highly esteemed, he said. Peace! Be strong now; be strong.’ When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, ‘Speak my Lord, since you have given me strength.’”*  
Daniel 10:18, 19.

It was Jesus Christ who stood with the Apostle Paul and strengthened him when he had to go to trial, *“But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion’s mouth.”* 2 Timothy 4:17. Paul also wrote us about the attacks of Satan’s wrath and how we can stand up under them by the power of Christ, *“Finally, be strong in the Lord, (or by means of the Lord), and in his mighty power.”* Ephesians 6:10

**Now if the power of Christ is strong enough for us to face the frightening ordeal of a trial, and if it’s strong enough to successfully withstand the devil’s rage, don’t you think it’s strong enough to face all the other things in life that we have to go through?**

David defeated his enemies in combat; he ran his kingdom; he dealt with many difficulties in life, and the only person he credited with the strength to do all that was Yahweh. *“The Lord is my light and my salvation- whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life (soul)- of whom shall I be afraid? Psalm 27:1,2. The salvation (deliverance) of the righteous comes from the Lord; he is their stronghold in time of trouble.”* Psalm 37:39. *How much clearer can it be than this? “I love you, Yahweh, my strength.”* Psalm 18:1

David looked to God for his strength to protect him against all his enemies, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Psalm 61:3 He knew that only Yahweh had the power needed to protect him and in faith he went to God. Are we looking to ourselves, or to God? He states it again in Psalm 24:8, *“Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.”*

Paul’s prayer for Christians is that they would be strengthened in the inner man by the power of the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 3:16. He knew, more than any of us, that we are not sufficient in ourselves to live the Christian life, please God, do his will and live life with all its pressures and problems. Why do we keep running back to the frailties of our flesh natures, a *“spider’s web to lean on”*, and not to the living all-powerful God?

It was due to Paul’s many trials and failures in them, due to his streak of self-reliance, that he finally stopped trusting in himself and started trusting in the power of God. *“We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we even despaired of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.”* 2 Corinthians 1:8,9 And it wasn’t until he was brought down to total despair that he decided to put his reliance on his own strength behind him and to start trusting in God and his power!

God had actually assigned to Paul a demon to buffet him every time he even thought about trusting in himself. He begged God three times to have it taken away from him for he was hit with something that he could not handle in his own strength. The Lord finally answered him saying, *“Enough for you the grace of me”*. In the Greek it’s very emphatic; it has the perfect tense which tells us that Christ told him, *“Enough for you the grace of*

me; I'm not taking it away from you, my grace is sufficient for you, so don't bring it up again!" 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

When Paul finally saw the freedom and peace that comes with the power of Christ that strengthens us inwardly, then he could say that he delighted in these various categories of crises. He realized that when he was weak in his own strength he became strong in the power of Christ. When he came to the end of his road of works, there he found the power of Christ.

In Philippians 4:12 Paul wrote, "*I have learned the secret*", or, "*I have been initiated into the mystery*". Paul was an extremely brilliant man, highly educated and well placed in the establishment; a man, who by the force of his will, would accomplish all that he set out to do; a man full of human good, self reliant; a man who relied on the strength of his flesh. Yet in the angelic conflict fell flat on his face in his own power.

It was twenty-five years after his salvation that he says that he had finally learned the secret for living life, that he had been initiated into the mystery of it all! He stated, "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*", or, "*I am strong for all things through Christ who in strengthens me*". Philippians 4:13

And yet, how many of us today are still trying to live life in our own power? How many of us are trying to serve the Lord in our own strength? How many of us are trying to handle our problems, pressures, trials and responsibilities by our selves instead of going to the Lord? Why is it that we go to him only **after** exhausting every avenue of works that we have? Why do we leave him to the last instead of going to him first? **And we wonder why we are depressed, discouraged, tired and worn out!**

The power of God is there for God's people, always has been and always will be. The difference between God's OT people and his NT people is that the Holy Spirit was outside of them, while the in the NT age of grace the Holy Spirit is inside all of us! We just need to appropriate God's power by faith and the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Someone said somewhere that, "God helps those who help themselves". This is patently false and is as far from biblical truth that you can get. The truth is that God helps the helpless! It is only when we come to the end of our striving and trying, when we come to the end of our own works and our own strength and finally turn to God and his power that he pours his strength into us!

Isn't it about time that we made the Lord our strength? Aren't we tired of wrestling with life and all its problems in our own power? Why don't we then make the Lord our strength by turning to him each and every day for the power that we need for life? The Lord was the strength of the Prophets, the Apostles, for kings and priests, and for all his people. Why not make him our strength by relying on his mighty power?

Pastor Mike