

## **TRUE STRENGTH**

### **Ways to measure strength**

Scripture has much to say about the subject of strength.

God makes a distinction between strong and weak believers in His Word. There are several notable ways to determine a man's strength, or lack of it. Christ warns many will be offended and turn away in our day (Mt. 24:10).

Why do people become offended and turn away from the Lord?

In the final analysis, it is because they are not strong! Rooted, grounded.

Therefore, the question arises, "What constitutes strength?"

Matthew 7:22,23 is a future picture of the judgment seat of Christ.

For some it will be a "horror scene" because they performed great and mighty works for God, yet they will be denied entrance into heaven.

Sometimes people we assume are *towers of strength* and are not at all.

It is so essential to be "rooted, grounded, strengthened, and settled" in order to endure to the end (1 Pet. 5:10, Col.1:23, Eph. 3:17).

*Self-control* is the standard by which God measures a man's strength: "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city" (Prov.16:32). The ability to keep our passions in check (love or hate) reveals whether or not we are a person of strength. We cannot rule the nations without first ruling our own spirit (Rev. 2:26).

Samson was strong physically but weak morally. He could conquer a city but was unable to govern his own spirit (Prov.16:32). He was ruled by lust. While he was performing miracles and slaying a thousand Philistines, he was a captive of manipulating women.

Therefore, Samson cannot be considered a man of inner strength.

Our goal, therefore, is to become mighty *in spirit* (Lk. 2:40). It says of Jesus "the child grew, and {became} strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

If our feelings are hurt easily or we are dominated by discouragement, or we cannot cope with family relationships, we are not a person of strength. Inward spiritual strength is what really counts (Psa.147:10,11).

In Revelation 3:7-8, God described the church of Philadelphia as having only “a little strength.” The church of Sardis was also weak: Were told to: “Strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die” (Rev. 3:2). Yet God desires every believer to be “*strengthened with all might*” (Col.1:11).

God distinguishes between strong and weak believers (Rom.15:1)  
“Ye that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak.”

In (Isa. 53:12), it says: Christ will “divide the spoil with *the strong*”. He shares *his victories with the strong*—with the overcomers. We are called to judge the world and to judge angels, and we are called to rule the nations with a rod of iron. Yet the spoil is *only* divided up amongst the strong, amongst the overcomers (Rev. 21:7).

### Strength Can Be Determined by the Following:

- By how *wise* we are
- By how much *humility* we possess
- By how well we cope with *rejection and criticism*
- By how well we *manage success*
- By how well we face the *loss* of something
- By how well we respond to *painful delays*
- By how much we have *conquered fears*
- By how well we handle people who have *hurt us*
- By how *dependent* we are upon the Lord
- By how *wholehearted* we are
- By how much *joy* we have, and *the fruits of the Spirit*

**Wisdom is strength** - Proverbs 24:5 says, “A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength.

Wisdom gives perspective and teaches us what to do in every situation. Often we wear ourselves out from wrong responses to life's difficulties. Seeing situations from God's point of view gives us enormous strength and peace. This is what wisdom produces.

Wisdom and knowledge produce stability. They are the strength of our salvation (Isa. 33:6). Wisdom knows how to respond to life's irritations. Wisdom, therefore, produces peace with others and it brings us into favor with God and man. Wisdom builds a home and puts marriages upon good foundations (Prov. 9:1, cf. Ja. 3:17). Wisdom is the principal thing in life; therefore, we are urged to pursue wisdom (Prov. 4:7).

**Humility is Strength** The Christian with genuine humility has rest. Jesus was the most humble man ever, and strongest (Mt.11:28-29). Humble man has nothing to prove, nothing to defend, and nothing to lose. The man of true humility is free! He is emotionally stable. He can let offenses go, and he has peace reigning in his soul. This is the reason he has such great inner strength, just as the Lamb of God.

The proud, on the other hand, have an ego—a big one. This ego is easily offended and hurt which sets off many other conflicts. Thus, the proud are tormented and vexed. They are not the master of their emotions, therefore, they are very weak.

### **The Ability to Handle Reproach is a Mark of Strength**

Are we ready to “give up” when we experience reproach or rejection?

God Himself was willing to look like a total failure - on the cross.

*A person of strength* can endure the reproach of looking like a failure.

At times, looking like a failure is part of Christ's sufferings (Phil. 3:10).

Many people live in fear of what others will think of them (Jn.12:42,43),  
But may we have a *greater* fear of what God will think of us. Consider the strength of our Lord Jesus who refused to hide His face from shame and spitting (Isa. 50:6). May we allow the Holy Spirit to cleanse our hearts of all shame and the spirit of embarrassment.

Some people never invite Jesus Christ into their lives because of the fear of rejection and reproach. The “fearful” of Revelation 21:8 are those who are afraid of what others would think of them for being identified with Christ. Others who do acknowledge Jesus later turn away from Him because of frowns or disapproval of family and friends. It requires strength to choose God *above* family and friends (Mt.10:37-39, 13:20-21, 24:10-12). The real issue in life is this: Whose approval are we seeking most—God's or man's?

Having promises from God, makes us secure, and gives us strength.

Joseph had promises from God. Therefore he could endure rejection.

Having promises from God gives us strength and stability.

Ask for promises, and have greater eternal vision. This makes us secure.

All of us will be tested; something unfair is going to cross our pathway. Maybe it will come from other Christians, or from those we admire.

Will we be offended and quit? Will we close our hearts and away from God?

Will we refuse the life-sustaining grace that is available to us?

Let us ask God for special grace to get over offenses; f

For if we are offended easily we are not strong.

Do not even consider going into the ministry if you cannot handle criticism.

Leadership is the main target of criticism and spiritual assault.

Strength—Not Being Ruined by Success Sometimes, difficulties are easier to handle than abundance of blessings. Trouble makes man look to God for help, but often prosperity causes people not to rely on God. Overconfidence and pride creep in! Unusual gifts, success tempt a man to think that he is uniquely favored of God above all others (Deut.17:20).

Prosperity can make us forget God (Deut. 6:10-13, 8:7-20, Jer. 22:21). Without special restraints, the heart becomes quickly proud. No one is exempt from this. Great success prompts preachers to boast ... My church is the fastest growing church in the state. But *The real goal*, - Is to draw all attention to God, and fade out of the picture.

In Acts, often when an apostle did a miracle, he was soon beaten up. Difficulties keep us humble. If we want to have *power without pain*, we will become corrupt quickly. Let us be people of strength, As Paul says . . . I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when we are weakened in this manner, then we are truly strong (2 Cor.12:9-10).

### **Strength—The Ability to Face the Loss of Something**

Paul testified that he had “suffered the loss of all things,” yet he had great victory within because his heart was not greatly fixed upon any of those things which he had lost. Therefore, Paul exhorts: “

Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:2).

How do we react when we lose some earthly thing?

Does it seem like the end of the world when something is taken from us?

Are there severe bouts of depression and anger?

If so, that thing over-monopolized our heart.

God never intended all our expectations to be fulfilled in —

A person—spouse, children, friends, a career, or an accomplishment.

Our expectation and joy must be *centered in Him* (Psa. 62:5, Jer.15:16).

Our attitude toward earthly possessions should be—“They are just borrowed.” When Job was stripped in a single day of all that he owned, he worshipped, saying, “The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21-22). Job's reaction to earthly loss proved that his heart was set upon God, not earthly blessings.

When God shuts a door or thwarts a direction we are trying to take maybe it's (marriage, a career, or some aspiration), we should thank Him wholeheartedly. God has something far better in mind for us.

Our Father alone knows what is best and what will really make us happy. Let us trust Him.

### **Another sign of Strength is – Right Response to Delays**

*Time* is a vital proof of our commitment to God.

Waiting for God's time is another evidence of possessing divine strength. Delays are purposed by God to reveal our true motives.

What is our reaction when God detains a quick answer to our request?

Perhaps you have prayed for years and still there is no clear word from him. A mature saint understands that when God is delaying an answer, He is doing so for some very good reasons. He realizes God will be faithful and speak when it is precisely the right time.

The Lord *waits* that He may be gracious unto us (Isa. 30:18).

Painful delays work out special facets of redemption in our hearts, This is the reason God does not always answer us immediately. Committed Christians understand this truth. And do not give God deadlines or ultimatums.

Real Christians are determined to do God's will (not their own) regardless of the cost or delays. During extended delays committed Christians pray like this—“Lord, please give me your grace and bring me through this phase of my journey, and perform in my life everything that is necessary.”

This attitude reveals strength and nobility. Waiting for God's time is evidence that we love Him. Failure to wait for God's time could result in the loss of an inheritance and it may upset God's plan for our lives (Isa. 64:4).

Isa 64:4 For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.

**Strength—When We Have Conquered Fears** Fears take away our faith and strength. God has not given us the spirit of fear (2 Tim.1:7).

*Fears stop life from flowing.*

Thus, God wants to deliver us from all our fears (Psa. 34:4).

Fear is an enemy because it hinders us from doing the will of God.

Over 22 million Americans who have notable debilitating phobias, though the actual number is believed to be much higher.

Fear is an enemy that can be overcome, but we must *take steps* to face them and overcome them.

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love” (1 Jn. 4:18).

Many fears are related to *other people*—the fear of rejection, the fear of what others are thinking.

Let us learn to be transparent and open with others.

Fear weakens us, but faith makes us strong.

**Strength—The Ability to Properly Handle Those Who Hurt Us**

God is against injustices, yet God is watching our reaction. Meekness

Most of our real problems are not outside of us—what someone has said or done. Our biggest problems are *within ourselves* (over-sensitiveness, insecurities, fears, guilt, grudges, no peace, no joy).

The problem lies in the fact that we are not strong within and our inner man needs to be built up. A man of strength can refrain from taking vengeance.

As we grow spiritually (in wisdom, joy, peace, love, longsuffering, forbearance, mercy, patience) we will respond to situations as Christ did.

There was a woman who was a vibrant witness for Christ. Her ministry brought hundreds of people to the Lord. Her husband was not as consecrated, and on one occasion he fell into moral sin. He felt deep remorse for his unfaithfulness and he asked his wife for forgiveness, but she refused! Instead, she hardened her heart against her husband and against the Lord.

She bitterly complained, “Lord, I have been faithful to you, but you have not been faithful to me. You have not kept my husband faithful to me.”

She refused to overcome her offense and later she died, cursing God.

She had failed to receive grace in her time of need (Heb. 4:16). Grace alone is our source of strength. While pointing over five hundred souls to eternal life, she herself missed eternal life (see 1 Cor. 9:27).

1Co 9:27\* But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway [or rejected].

**Strength—From Dependence on God** The one who realizes his own need, prays earnestly and relies on God for strength. Thus, he is strengthened and he stands. The man who is confident in himself (confident in the flesh - Phil. 3:3) and self-reliant, does not seek God. Thus, he is not strengthened, and falls.

This is why strong men in the natural fail, but dependent men succeed. The attitude of dependence determines how strong a person really is. Christ was the strongest man who ever lived. He was the most *dependent*. He relied totally upon His Father for strength / grace to help in time of need. This was the secret of His strength. No one else has ever endured such criticism, rejection and contradiction (Heb.12:3). No one else has ever faced injustices as our Lord. But Jesus possessed supernatural strength as He relied and depended totally upon the Father in prayer and in attitude.



**Strength—the result of Being Wholehearted** We are strong when *every part of us* is rooted and grounded in love for God (Eph. 3:17). The reason men fail is because there is not a whole commitment of love.

When God sees something in the heart that will take a man off course, He speaks, over and over again. Then He gives them scriptures to warn them. When these are ignored, He raises up circumstances to get their attention. Then He sends other brethren to speak to them. Finally, that unsundered issue in their heart becomes an offense, and they turn away from God. **Strength is when we are totally committed to God.**

**Strength—From Joy and All the Fruits of the Spirit** “The joy of the Lord is your strength” (Neh. 8:10). A man's spiritual strength is measured by his joy. Joy keeps our spirit free of bitterness and grudges. Joy purifies the soul and heals past wounds.

Joy cures depression and sorrow. “A merry heart does good like a medicine.” Although depression is a spiritual problem, it makes the body weak, but joy gives life and strength to our body as well as to our soul.

Joy gave the apostles victory over self-pity and a persecution complex when they were ill-treated (Acts 5:41, 16:23-26). Satan cannot control the man or woman who is filled with joy.

Joy defeats the Enemy. If there is anything that is blocking up your well such as hatred, jealousy, unforgiveness, or lust, go to the Lord and to the ministry if necessary to get these blockages unstopped (Gen. 26:15-22). Seek earnestly to be totally free in spirit.

**All the nine fruits of the Spirit, are divine strengths.** Lets allow God to develop all these beautiful fruits of the spirit in our lives. They will be developed as we grow in our spiritual life. Let's be strong Christians, and endure to the end.

