

# The Prayer for Strength

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[ 0 : 00 ] Right now, today, it will absolutely help you going through life in the moments or the seasons of life and things that you face as it comes and goes.

When we think about the trials of life and hard times and afflictions and just having to face and endure anything, what I want to do tonight is try to show you how to pray.

And it's a way that it's rarely discussed when you talk about prayer or hear anybody talk or preach about prayer. It's rarely discussed. And I'm pretty sure this can help somebody here tonight or at least just, like I said, gain some insight or instruction to prepare you for what's coming down the road.

So would you find in your Bible Luke chapter 11? And we're going to run through some Bible tonight, so be ready to turn.

That's why I'm calling this kind of a Bible study. So a lot of scripture to cover tonight, starting in Luke 11. And this is the Luke version of what we're very familiar with in Matthew 6, where they call it the Lord's Prayer, where they say, teach us to pray.

[ 1 : 09 ] And that's what's happening here. I'll start in verse number one. And it came to pass that as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

And he said unto them, when you pray, say, our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done as in heaven, so in earth.

Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

I'm going to focus in on that last line there, that last sentence of verse 4, where the Lord Jesus Christ teaches his Jewish disciples to pray to their heavenly Father and to say, lead us not into temptation, which would be just a trial or a bad hardship.

But he says, but instead of that, deliver us from evil. Because we don't want to deal with hardships. We don't want to have trials and temptations and tests in this life.

[ 2 : 18 ] So the prayer is, Jesus tells his disciples, pray this way. Pray God, deliver us from the evil. You think of sin, but evil is not necessarily sin.

Evil is just bad things. The Lord creates evil, if you study your Bible. And you can find yourself in evil as a result of your sin, of course, but you can also just find yourself, the Bible says it's will of God to deliver us from this present evil world.

Now, you can be in a bad situation. It can be considered evil in a sense of negative things happening. And what Christ is informing his disciples about is a prayer of deliverance, which is a good prayer.

It's an instinctual prayer. When you think about prayer, you automatically, I mean, like, who doesn't want God to deliver them from the bad things of life? Who does, I mean, who embraces hard times? Who's looking forward to the next one? Nobody is. Everybody here wants to have an easier go of it. You pray that God would deliver you, too. If something happens, your first instinctive prayer is for God, take it from me.

[ 3 : 24 ] God, get this off of me. God, get me away from it and get it away from me. You just don't want to deal with it. You want God to take care of the discomfort and the displeasures and the afflictions and the trials and the persecutions or whatever they may be.

You want God to fix it all. And so we pray for him to fix it and fix it quickly. Deliver me. But there came a time when the Lord Jesus Christ prayed for deliverance and the Father would not answer his prayer.

And so flip over to chapter 22 now. Luke chapter 22. And this is, as you very well know, before the cross of Calvary, the night before, he's in the garden with his disciples.

Luke chapter 22. And we'll begin in verse 39. And he came out and went, as he was wont, to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples also followed him.

And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. That's the same prayer, isn't it? And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast and kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me.

[ 4 : 38 ] I don't want to go through with it. Deliver me from it. If thou be willing. He's praying a prayer of deliverance. Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.

And now look at how God responded to his prayer. Verse 43. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

When Jesus prayed for a way out, God did not grant that prayer. Instead, he sent an angel to strengthen the Son.

To strengthen him. The way out, the deliverance, was not the will of God. It was not what God wanted to see happen at all that night. And so he did not answer that prayer.

But what Jesus Christ needed in that moment was strength. He told his disciples to pray with him, to watch with him. Why? Because the flesh is weak. He needed strength.

[ 5 : 39 ] As a man, he was going to face something that he did not want to face. Nor would you or I. Now flip over to 2 Corinthians chapter 12. 2 Corinthians chapter 12.

When Jesus wanted deliverance, he got strengthened instead. I want to give you another example of this before we really even get into it.

2 Corinthians 12. This is now the Apostle Paul. And he has something to deal with that he did not like one bit. And he prayed three times for God to deliver him from this.

Verse number 7. There is no question Paul's desire and his will in this situation.

I want it gone, God. Please get it out of here. Deliver me from this messenger, this buffeting, this trial, if I could call it that.

[ 6 : 52 ] And here's God's reply in verse 9. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. That is, in your weakness, Paul.

I'm not going to take it away. I need this thing to beat you down and to weaken you so that my strength can start to flow through you. Now Paul then responds at the end of that verse.

And he's like, well, then I'm all in. I'll take whatever you give me. Because if that's going to make me the power of Christ in my life. He continues, Paul is no longer going to pray for deliverance anymore.

Because he realized it's where the strength comes from, is being in that. So when he started by praying for the deliverance, he found that this is God's way of actually making him stronger.

And so he changed his view on the trials. Now going back to the beginning, when Christ taught his disciples to pray, the prayer of deliverance, it's a worthy prayer.

[ 8 : 14 ] It's the go-to prayer for all of us. It's instinctive. It's a biblical prayer. On many occasions, we could study that out and show you how God, not just there, but other places, other men like David or Jeremiah or Moses, they pray prayers of deliverance for God to fix it, to resolve the situation, to show himself mighty.

They pray those prayers. It's a biblical prayer. But it is not always the right prayer. And this is what I want us to learn tonight. There's a valuable lesson to learn that sometimes, instead of praying for God to deliver us, the right prayer is the prayer of strength or a prayer for strength.

I want you to notice how the apostle Paul prayed for his converts. Flip over to Ephesians chapter number three. I'll take you through just a couple quick books here of Paul's writings to these churches that he cared for.

It fell upon his shoulders, the care of all the churches. And so he prayed for them. And it shows up in many of the epistles how he prayed for them.

Chapter three, and I'll start in verse 13 to get the context. Ephesians 3, 13. Wherefore, I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

[ 9 : 37 ] For this cause, I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, first thing, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.

That's the first thing on his list in this passage. Paul wants them to be strengthened on the inside. Now, continue looking. We'll go to the next book, Philippians chapter four.

Philippians chapter four. And the apostle Paul, about halfway through this chapter, talks about this church caring for him and helping him out.

And he says, I've learned a few things, whether it's good or bad. Whether I have or don't. To be content. Verse 12, he says, 4, 12.

I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I'm instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me.

[10:42] This is the same guy who wanted to get rid of that thorn in the flesh. And then the Lord showed him, nope, forget about it. No more praying for deliverance. You need strength from me.

And now Paul says, I can be up. I can be down. I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me. So Jesus Christ gave Paul the strength to do all things that he was called to do. Whether it was reproaches, like he mentioned earlier, or necessities, or persecutions in 2 Corinthians 9, what we just read. Or you could take the list, chapter 11, and get that whole list of all the things that went down on him.

Enduring all the hardships. Preaching the gospel in much affliction. He's always on the go. He's bound up in a prison cell on more than one occasion and saying, I can do this.

He's not praying for deliverance anymore. He's saying, I can do this. Because Jesus Christ is strengthening me. Flip over to Colossians. One page over to Colossians, chapter 1.

[11:48] And I'll start in verse number 9. Watch, he's praying again for this church. For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of his will and all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, verse 11, strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power.

Paul knew something about that. The power of Christ resting on him. But it came through afflictions. And it came through testing and trials. And now he prays again, once again, for this church, that the strength would come from God, be on the inside, and then enable them to walk worthy of their calling, to allow them to have a fruitful Christian life.

Flip over to the next church. Look at 1 Thessalonians, chapter 1, and verse number 6. The first epistle he writes to this church, and identifying how he found them.

Verse 6, And ye became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost. So that they're going through something there at that church. Look at chapter 2, and verse 14. 1 Thessalonians 2, 14. For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God, which in Judea are in Christ Jesus.

[13:21] For ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews. So they're going through some stuff. It's showing more and more.

And just not giving you everything here, but look at chapter 3, verse 3. He acknowledges it again, that no man should be moved by these afflictions.

Watch this. For yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. Appointed to the afflictions, are they? Verse 4, For verily when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation.

Now just let this build up here for one more verse. Go to the next book, 2 Thessalonians, same church, chapter 1, verses 3 and 4, and they're still going through it.

Verses 3 and 4. We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth, so that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure.

[14:31] So the result of their life and their salvation and their living for God turns into persecution and affliction and trial.

And when continuing in this chapter, the result of them enduring that is that when God comes back, he is going to judge those that troubled them. And I don't read it all, but he shows up in the second coming judging the unbelievers and they're condemned already and on and on.

And now here's the point with what Paul is praying for these believers. He doesn't pray that their adversaries would be destroyed because that day is coming as he references later in this same

chapter.

He doesn't pray that God would just remove all opposition and just open the doors wide. You don't hear him talk like that. Yet he does say, you guys are doing a great job when you're suffering that affliction and you're dealing with all this mess and this strife and you're doing good.

Your faith is growing exceedingly. And the Lord's in that stuff. And I'm praying for you that you'll be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man. His prayer for the people of God is not deliverance at all.

[15:49] He says, you're actually, you're called to this stuff. His prayer for them is a prayer for strengthening. A prayer that they would grow up, that they would rise to the occasion, that they would fight for what's right, that they would be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand, to war a good warfare, to live faithful and fruitful Christian lives in the adversity and in the affliction.

So it's a prayer for strengthening. And I'm going to submit to you tonight that this is a, sometimes deliverance is the right prayer. It's obviously the one we want the most.

But it's not always the right one. And I want to submit to you to learn this truth tonight. If you've never heard it before, take it and let the scriptures bear it out. Sometimes the right prayer and maybe more for us than ever before is a prayer for strength.

Let me give you some examples from the word of God. Flip over to Psalm 18. Psalm 18. Make some notes tonight.

Soak this up because this is, you're going to need this. Psalm 18. Let's look at just the beginning of this psalm and then we'll skip ahead a little bit later.

[17:18] We're going to start in verse 1. David here says, I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer.

My God, my strength, and whom I will trust. My buckler and the horn of my salvation and my high tower. I will call upon the Lord who is worthy to be praised.

So shall I be saved from mine enemies. Sounds like deliverance there, but pay attention. The sorrows of death compassed me and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.

The sorrows of hell compassed me about. The snares of death prevented me. In my distress, I called upon the Lord and cried unto my God. He heard my voice out of his temple and my cry came before him even into his ears.

And then he gives this futuristic, prophetic description of God and what David as a prophet got to see. But skim down a little later into this passage to verse 30.

[18:24] And let's read a few more verses here from verse 30 to verse 40. Psalm 18, verse 30. As for God, his way is perfect. The word of the Lord is tried. He is a buckler to those that trust in him.

For who is God save the Lord? For who is a rock save our God? It is God that girdeth me with strength and maketh my way perfect. He maketh my feet like hinds feet and setteth me upon my high places.

He teacheth my hands to war so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms. Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation and thy right hand hath holden me up and thy gentleness hath made me great.

Thou hast enlarged my steps under me that my feet did not slip. I have pursued mine enemies and overtaken them. Neither did I turn again till they were consumed. I have wounded them that they were not able to rise.

They are fallen under my feet for thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle. Thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me. Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies that I might destroy them that hate me.

[19:35] He calls it, you gave me strength unto the battle. What's the point? The prayer was not to remove the enemy out of the way.

To just blow on them and have them dispersed and dispelled and I don't ever have to face them again. The prayer and the call and what God delivered was strength for David to go fight.

Not to sit at home and say, okay God, you take care of it for me. But no, God put something inside of him to go out and fight. To war. God did not remove the opposition.

David had to fight. And then God removed it. David had to learn to stand. Just like you and I need to learn to stand.

We need to learn to fight that spiritual warfare before us. Flip over while you're in the Psalms. Look at Psalm 144. God wants to see us learn how to stand up and fight.

[ 20 : 43 ] To learn how to do what's right in the face of adversity and not buckle and fall. Psalm 144. Look at just verse number one.

Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war and my fingers to fight. That's what God's doing with his soldier.

Training him to fight. To get up and go out there and fight another battle. I don't think I have to make the application spiritually to you. I think it's pretty plain.

God wants you to take a stand. To be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might and put on the whole armor of God and do something for Jesus Christ.

You don't have to turn, but I'm going to go back to Judges and just want to point something out here that the mind of God toward his people. In Judges chapter 3, when through Joshua, he was going to take them into the land and the Lord didn't deliver them and he just didn't wipe out everybody in front of them.

[ 21 : 47 ] Why not, God? Judges chapter 3 verse 1 says, Now these are the nations which the Lord left to prove Israel by them. Even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan.

That would be under Joshua. Only that the generation of the children of Israel might know to teach them war. At the least, such as before, knew nothing thereof.

And he says later in verse 4, they were to prove Israel by them. Those nations he left, five lords of the Philistines and so forth, to know whether they would hearken under the commandments of the Lord.

It seems that's the Lord's way, is to test his people. And he'll train you and put you through something. He wants to strengthen you in it so that you can rise up and do something rather than just do it all for you.

What kind of a character is in a child who just has everything given to them all their life long? Like, what kind of character? Are they worth anything?

[ 22 : 53 ] Generally speaking, they're crybabies. They're entitled. They feel like everybody should just keep giving to them and get out of their way and let them do their thing. That's not healthy. Not in our society.

It's not productive. Now think of that in the Christian life. If God just gives you everything you ask for and everything you want and all your heart's desire and makes every path easy for you, you're worthless.

You're helpless. One little thing that comes your way, you'll flip out on it like the entitled, spoiled brat and you'll lose control. God wants to temper his soldier and he'll do it by testing.

I'll give you another example. Look at Nehemiah chapter number two. Nehemiah chapter two and we'll just highlight a few things in this book and draw this out as also another example.

Nehemiah gets back into the land out of captivity. Ezra was under this construction project of building the temple and now Nehemiah's going there and he checks it out in this chapter.

[ 24 : 07 ] He goes around, takes a good look at it all. At nighttime sees the bad shape of the wall surrounding Jerusalem. It's in his heart of the Lord and it's going to be his duty now to build that wall.

Verse 17 of chapter two, Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste and the gates thereof are burned with fire. Come, let us build up the wall of Jerusalem that we be no more a reproach.

Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me as also the king's word that he had spoken unto me and they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work.

And so they're into it, right? They're ready to go. They're all keyed up and fired up and the adrenaline's flowing and immediately in verse 19, opposition shows up laughing them to scorn, despising them and just ridiculing these people and for their efforts.

But they go to build and chapter three describes each person and each different diverse person there and they're building and the different gates going on. And at the end, like this is going really good.

[ 25 : 18 ] They're repairing the gates. It's really going well. And here comes the opposition again in chapter four to ridicule them some more. And so Nehemiah responds to this in just notice verse

number, look at verse number six.

It says, So built we the wall and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof for the people had a mind to work. And then there comes the opposition again and they continue against them and verse eight says, and conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem and to hinder us.

Nevertheless, we made our prayer unto our God and set a watch against them day and night because of them. And so they're deciding, we're going to keep, we're going to do what we can. But look at verse 10. Look what starts to happen because of the opposition, the adversaries.

And Judas said, the strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed. And there's much rubbish so that we're not able to build the wall. It's coming to a standstill.

It's starting to stall out. All that adrenaline and excitement and all of it's going so well, but it's just opposition and it's starting to wear on them and it's not, it's, you know, it's just like every project.

[ 26 : 30 ] It starts off with a bang and then it just ends up costing more money and the time frame just gets pushed back and back and back just like every project. And so the opposition carries on further yet.

But let's move ahead a little bit more. Go to chapter number six. And this is where we'll stop with this. Chapter six, those guys show up again, try to do mischief to them in verse one and two.

And Nehemiah is not having it. He's avoiding this. They're trying to get them to come together. They want to make them afraid. Verse number eight, chapter six, verse eight. Then I sent unto them saying, there are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou faintest them out of their own heart. For they all made us afraid, saying their hands shall be weakened from the work that it be not done. And now here's the prayer. Now therefore, oh God, strengthen my hands.

Nehemiah prays for strength to work. Verse nine says, they all made us afraid. Afraid. They were really afraid.

[ 27 : 42 ] The enemy had been assaulting them, had been opposing them. There's a time where they've got, they're working with one hand and with a sword girded in the other. They are afraid of turning their backs and facing the wall they're building upon.

They're trying to do the work. They're trying to accomplish this feat, but it's getting bad. And so Nehemiah says, God, strengthen my hands. I want to keep going.

I'd want to see this through to the end. And I don't want to be distracted or deterred. I want to finish the job that God gave me to do. And so once again, the prayer here, it's not for God to remove the threat, but it's for God to give me strength to finish the job.

They were weary, just like we can grow weary in well-doing, just like we need strength. But the prayer is not, oh God, make this easier for me.

God, do a miracle. Move mountains. Cast them into the sea for me. The prayer is, God, strengthen my hands so that I'll finish this job that you've called me to do.

[ 28 : 53 ] Do you remember Paul saying that in Colossians? Say to Archippus, take heed to the ministry that thou hast received of the Lord, that thou fulfill it. That's a good call. When Paul finished his course and kept the faith, he said that.

I ran or fought a good fight. I finished my course. That's what he wanted Archippus to do, finish his course. That's what we should want to do is finish the job. So what do we need?

A miracle? Or do we just need God to strengthen us, to go forward, to commit to the work, and to ask God to strengthen us to see it through?

Praying for strength shows that your intentions are to see this through, that your intentions are not to turn tail and run and to give up, but you intend to work.

How do you think God would honor a prayer like that? God, please strengthen me to continue serving you. Instead of, God, please make this, go away so I don't have to deal with it.

[ 29 : 56 ] Which one do you think God is going to honor quicker? There's a prayer of deliverance, but there's a prayer of strength. It seems to me this is going to be the one God's going to respond to.

Look at Isaiah chapter 40. These are some very popular verses, and boy, do they ever hit on this topic tonight. Isaiah chapter 40. And we're going to go all the way to the end of the chapter.

All right, I'm catching another verse here. Isaiah 40, look at verse, they'll start in 27. This is a question that God's asking his people. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel?

And this is what they say. My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment's passed over from my God, saying, God doesn't see us. God's not looking. He's not going to care for us. He's not going to help us. And God's like, why do you say that stuff? Verse 28, Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard that the everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?

[ 31 : 19 ] There is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength.

Even the youth shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles.

They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint. What a promise from the Lord. That he'll renew your strength.

When you're growing weary in the fight, or when you're growing weary in the work, God will renew the strength if you'll pray that prayer for strength. One more verse, and you might as well turn to it since this is it.

Look at Deuteronomy 33, our very last passage now. Deuteronomy, verse 33. As Moses is about to die, and he's blessing the children of Israel, these 12 tribes, he's calling them out one by one.

[ 32 : 31 ] He gets to verse, to Asher, in verse 24. Deuteronomy 33, 24. And of Asher, he said, Let Asher be blessed with children, let him be accepted to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil.

Thy shoes shall be iron and brass. And notice this phrase, And as thy days, so shall thy strength be. It's a promise that God would provide strength for each day, one after another. Just like he promised that his mercies would be new every morning, so would his strength to his children to continue on just one day's worth, and the next day I'll give you the next day's worth.

And so the songwriter wrote that hymn and plugged that into it in the song Day by Day, singing, As thy strength as thy days, no, as thy days, thy strength shall be in measure.

This the pledge to me he made. So when you get bad news, and God is not going to take it away, he's not going to do a miracle, we need to pray for strength.

[ 33 : 51 ] Pray for strength to endure this situation, to remain faithful throughout the whole thing. When you're faced with temptation, pray for strength.

Strength to resist the devil, to hold up that shield of faith and quench the fiery darts of the wicked. And when you grow weary in well-doing, ask your God to renew your strength.

I believe it's a prayer that he will honor. To look on his child and say, help me, God. Help me keep going forward. Can you picture a dad trying to train up his child to do something on his own?

And he takes his hands off and the child struggles, said, Dad, help me. I want to do this, but help me. Can you see the dad say, no, tough luck? Or, no, he's going to help him. It's going to help see them get through it.

I can see God honoring that prayer. It's not always your go-to prayer, though, is it? You pray for deliverance. Deliverance. And sometimes that's what God will do because he's a mighty God.

[ 34 : 55 ] But sometimes, church, Christian, in your walk with him, the prayer needs to be for strength. Strengthen thy servant. Strengthen me by your spirit with might in the inner man so that I can keep going and please you until you call me home.

I think God will honor that prayer. Fathers, we dismiss. I want to just give you the glory for what your word has exposed to us tonight. Lord, help us to have discernment in our Christian lives and know when it's deliverance and know when it's strength that we need to be praying for.

I pray, Lord, that you would strengthen us. Help us not to be babies. Help us not to be crying all the time for you to fix everything when in reality we just need to grow up.

We need to man up in our Christian life. We need to stand up and fight the good fight of faith strengthened with might by your spirit. God, thank you for the lesson tonight.

May it bear fruit in our lives and in our hearts. I want to pray also thankful prayer for the new baby being born today. I pray that your hand be upon that child in these early hours and early days and allow it to grow and strengthen quickly and give wisdom to Shane and to Lily as they bring this child into their home.

[ 36 : 19 ] I want to pray for our brother and sister that joined with us tonight and pray that you'll meet their needs here on the road as they're here in the States and protect and shield the work as they're away from it and just help them to grow.

May their faith grow exceedingly in the Netherlands and may you use this time to let the brethren minister to them here in the States and to God be the glory for all that you do there. We're thankful for a good report and it's a blessing to hear that. I pray also that you'll be with our sister Linda West that you'll strengthen her and that you'll strengthen her mind and that you'll get her back here to church as soon as possible and we pray this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. You're dismissed.