

Be Strong

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[0:00] God calls us to be strong, to find our strength in Him.

And it's at those weakest points, at those weakest times, that we can find that strength, truly find that strength. 1 Corinthians 16, verse 13, it says, Stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong, let all your things be done with charity.

Stand fast in the faith, quit you like men. In other words, it's got the sense of acquit, or in other words, act like men. Be strong, let all your things be done with charity.

The Word of God urges us to be strong. Many times there's these exaltations to be strong.

We know that we're living in a time where weakness seems to prevail, where apathy prevails, where there's a lack of strength. And people are faltering and failing and weak in their Christian faith.

[1:19] And God says to us to be strong. Firstly, be strong and take a stand. God calls us to be awake in these times. I touched on this morning of the context of these end of days that we're in.

As many could perceive it to be that closing of time before our Lord comes. We know that every day we're one day closer. And these are times to be awake, to be alert, to stand firm, to take a stand.

By God's power we can learn to stand fast in faith and in Christ's likeness. As God calls us to this, He calls us, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong, be strong.

God calls us to stand up, to stand up for what is right, for what is true, for integrity and character.

Take a stand, people are watching you. Be strong and don't falter.

We know we've got younger Christians watching us. We might have younger ones in our own families watching us. Watching our every step. Our workmates watching us when they know we're a Christian. Oh, there he goes again.

[2:27] He calls himself a Christian. That's what they want to be able to say, isn't it? We don't want to give them any ammunition for that. Hold your ground. Take a stand. And take a stand in personal faith through those tough times.

That God is developing you. It's like that jogger. It's like Brad when he goes for that run, as he was telling us this morning. And he's just got that stamina, that endurance, that strength there.

You wouldn't know it by looking at him, but you can see there's a strength there that's hidden underneath all the flab. But we all have this time where we see the running man, the running woman down the track.

That jogger that just keeps on keeping on. Persisting. Keeping working at it. That's the sense of it, really. Of the Christian life, isn't it? That it's a marathon event. It's a long distance event.

And it's like that jogger who just keeps working at it. And building up the strength as they go. Going through, pushing through. As they get their second wind. Their second breath. And they go through that cramp, that ache inside.

[3:35] And they just press on. And they go through that wall, yeah. And it's in those times when we're feeling like it's all too hard. When we're feeling pushed. You know, tonight, before the service, you know, everything was going to pieces for me at home.

We had the, my son was cooking something. And the fire alarm was going off. And we couldn't work out how to turn it off. And everybody was panicking. And it was ten to six.

But I still made it on time. But, you know, that's one of the blessings of living nearby. But we had these times when we pressed, when we're under the pump. And we need, we have need of endurance and need of patience.

And we have need to wait. And keep at it in faith. And develop that spiritual stamina when we're on that racetrack. And we're getting that cramp. We're hitting that wall.

We keep on keeping on. And we wait on the Lord. Psalm 27, it says, Wait on the Lord. Be of good courage. And he shall strengthen thine heart.

[4:37] Wait, I say, on the Lord. Sometimes there's a waiting. There's a time of finding that patience. That time of waiting on him. And waiting for the answers in prayer.

When it seems like there's no answers. We just keep waiting. And we keep trusting. And he's developing us. He's strengthening us through that time. Take a stand. He stood up for you. Taking our guilt. Taking our shame. Bearing the cross for us. Be strong and take a stand. Secondly, be strong and take courage. Back to the text we started with.

It says, Watch ye stand fast in the faith. Quit you or equip yourself. Act like men. Be strong. Be strong and take courage. Say quit you like men.

Act like men. In other words, be manly. You could express it. Be men of courage. Be men and women of courage. Face opposition with that manliness.

[5:35] That challenge that faces you. Act in that manly, courageous way. We have need of courage in these times. There's opposing forces that will wear us down.

I'm sure none of you have such things in your life. But I have some. We all have some. Those things that, if you were to take it to heart, it would just wear you down.

And flatten you out. And it is a battle sometimes. It's a battle for all of us. For some more than others here tonight. Where there's opposing forces.

There's things that we're having to face up to. There's things that are causing us to feel weighed down. And like it's pretty hard going. But we must press on.

And take a stand. And take courage. To not lose our resolve. God told Joshua this in Joshua 1. You might like to turn there. Although we're projecting it to. Joshua was told as he was facing these trials of his life.

[6:37] God said to Joshua, be strong and very courageous. Strong and very courageous. Two of these things.

They go hand in hand. God told Joshua at this moment when he was saying to him, go over this Jordan. Go over this Jordan. He was going to cross a river into a hostile territory.

He was going to cross into somewhat of an unknown territory. Into Jordan. Go over this Jordan. And he faced many adversaries.

He faced much opposition. And from verse 7 of Joshua 1 it says, God told Joshua, only be thou strong and very courageous.

That thou mayest observe to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded thee. God told Joshua, be strong and very courageous.

[7:39] God's strength leads us to courage. They go together. And there's a third component here. It's God's word. Be strong and very courageous.

And it's God's word that is the third component. That equips us with this courage. It goes on. Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left. That thou mayest prosper with us however thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth. But thou shalt meditate therein day and night. That thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein.

He tells Joshua, be strong and very courageous. And this book, you shall meditate on it day and night. Just as Psalm 1 says too. That we may observe to do all that is written therein.

For then shalt thou make thy way prosperous. And then shalt thou have good success. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of good courage. Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed.

[8:42] Why? For the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest. Whatever lies ahead, whatever track life takes you, God is already there. And he will be with you wherever you go.

Sometimes you just have to step out in faith and have courage. And the underpinning of our faith is the word of God. Step out on the word like Peter did.

Peter, as he was in the boat and the Lord approached him across the water. So Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

The Lord Jesus then, verse 29 of Matthew 14 said, come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. He stepped out on the word, the simple word, come.

And as Jesus invited Peter, Peter stepped out in faith, in an amazing feat of faith.

[9:49] And the word has power today. The word has power. It's like a seed, just a little seed, a mustard seed of faith can produce a great crop.

As we know, just a tiny seed can bring a glorious, large tree to life.

And so too, this word is seed for us. It's got power resident in it as it's planted and it flourishes and brings life. Adoniram Judson was the first modern missionary to depart from America.

And he was bold and courageous in his faith. He was stepping out into the unknown. And he spent his life preaching about the Lord Jesus in Burma. And one day his wife told him that a newspaper article likened him to one of the apostles.

And Judson replied, I do not want to be like a Paul or any mere man. I want to be like Christ. I want to follow him only.

[10:57] Copy his teachings. Drink in his spirit. And place my feet in his footprints. Oh, to be more like Christ. That was his plea. Oh, to be more like Christ.

It took courage for Judson to step out into such a work. And it takes courage too. As we will aim likewise to be Christ-like.

Be strong and very courageous. And meditate in the word day and night. Thirdly, we seek to be strong and take action. The faith that we have is to be active faith.

We are to be strengthened in our faith and walk with the Lord. And it prompts us to action. To take action. This faith is not some armchair faith. But it is a faith that is in the work.

A faith that is energised and activated. That's living and breathing and practical and living in our shoes. 24 by 7. We don't turn it on for Sundays and then turn it off for the rest of the week.

[12:04] Our faith is something that's a powerful energy that consumes us and activates us. So that we're not one thing at home and another thing at work.

Or one thing at the church and another thing elsewhere. But that our faith is real and living. And this faith is strong. There's a strength to it.

There's a resolve to it. A strengthening of service. A strengthening of character. Of faithfulness. And he makes us strong. He gives us the strength to engage in his service.

In Daniel 11.32. It tells us how we should be strong and take action. In part it says, Daniel 11.32.

But the people who know their God shall be strong and do exploits.

The people who do know their God shall be strong and shall do exploits. Where do we find this strength that is spoken of here?

[13:08] This strength that we need? It's by drawing on God's power. In Philippians 4.13. It says, Paul says, I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Christ is the source of our strength. God's presence brings us strength. In Isaiah 40. I know I was inspired this morning by the Bible reading. That he giveth power to the faint.

And to them that have no might. He increases strength. When we feel like we don't have the might.

He increases our 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.

And they shall walk and not faint. There's many promises there, isn't there? Well, just take a hold of that one. As it's been emphasised today. God's strength works in us to activate us to do his will.

[14:13] To both to will and to do of his will. In Philippians 2.13. It says, For it is God which worketh in you. That's amazing in itself, isn't it?

That God, the creator of the universe, should deign to work in you and me. Human vessels. Mere dust. Really glorified dust. That he would work in such a swing.

In such a worm as I. As it were, in such an insignificant human form. In our human frame. That God can work in you.

And it is God which worketh in you. Both to will and to do of his good pleasure. He gives us the will and he gives us the doing. It's a being strong and taking action that we need today.

And when we live the life he's called us to, it'll be evident. Someone has said this, When wealth is lost, nothing is lost. When health is lost, something is lost.

[15:13] When character is lost, all is lost. All is lost. We don't want to lose character. We want to have character. We want to have strength of character. And God helping us.

As we pray. As we trust him. As we lean on his strength. He'll give us the get up and go. And the keep on going. To be strong. And to live as would honour him.

And we have that responsibility in our home. In this community. In our church. To govern ourselves with strength. In Proverbs 16, here's a very practical one.

He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty. And he that ruleeth his spirit. And he that taketh the city. Have you seen some people that don't have rule over their spirit?

They get all steamed up. And the smoke starts coming out of their ears. And they start popping the veins. And they put on that face. They're about to explode.

[16:11] The volcano is about to blow. And it says that he that is slow to anger is better than the mighty. And he that ruleeth his spirit than he that taketh the city.

There's a certain sense of self-control. That God helps us to crucify the flesh. To put that under God's yoke and God's control. And that's the kind of practical side.

As this being strong and taking action. It means that it changes how we live. How we react. How we act amongst others. Our character. And we have this responsibility to put our Christianity into practice.

When the rubber hits the road. When someone presses all your buttons. Or treads on your toes.

And you just want to let loose. That's the old man. He's dead.

He should be. Sometimes he rears his ugly head. Every so often. I've got to keep that one under control. And I'm sure. Well maybe some of you do too.

[17:14] That there's still that old flesh there. There's still that old nature. And we want to rule over our spirit. Rule over our spirit. And have that control.

That God gives us self-control. Temperance. And that meekness. And that Christ-likeness. All the fruit of the spirit. As that being strong and taking action. Makes a difference in our lives.

We see that Paul told Timothy. In 2 Timothy 2 verse 1. Thou therefore my son. Be strong in the grace. That is in Christ Jesus. There's a strength to God's grace.

To the grace of Christ. And he gives us that grace. Men. My son. Be strong. In the grace. That is in Christ Jesus. And there's a strength of the women too. The Proverbs 31 woman.

It says in Proverbs 31 verse 25. Strength and honour are her clothing. And she shall rejoice in time to come. So men can be strong. And women can be strong.

[18:11] God's word says you can be strong. In his grace. You can have strength and honour. As you're clothing women here tonight. Where can we find the source of this power? The source of this power of which we speak.

In Psalm 118 verse 14. It says. The Lord is my strength. And song. And has become my salvation. The Lord is my strength.

That's an amazing statement really isn't it? You just can grasp the whole of just that part of the verse. The Lord is my strength. When you're feeling like you've lost all strength.

When you're feeling powerless and weak and weary. He is your strength. He is your strength. It is in him that we can face our burdens. It is through him that we can face our trials.

When we're feeling tested and strict. It's in him. He is our strength. David says further in Psalm 56 verse 3. What time I am afraid I will trust in thee.

[19:16] What time I am afraid I will trust in thee. Those times when it's hard. Trust him.

Trust him. Trust him still. And he will help you overcome. What's hindering your faith. What's challenging your faith. And David also says in 2 Samuel 22 verse 33.

God is my strength and power. He maketh my way perfect. He's my strength. He's my power. We can make that declaration too.

Friends tonight you might feel I'm just an average Christian. I've flipped and flopped. And I don't feel like I'm making much progress in my Christian life. And I feel like I'm not as strong as others. And I feel like I'm lacking. God is your strength and power. God is your strength and power. [20:16] And he wants you to realise that. To seize that. To apply that. So that you can grow to be a mature, useful Christian. Here's a poem that's directed at men. The strength of a man, it's called.

The strength of a man isn't in the deep tone of his voice. It's in the gentle words he whispers. The strength of a man isn't how many buddies he has. It's how good a buddy he is with his children. The strength of a man isn't in how respected he is at work. It's in how respected he is at home. The strength of a man isn't in how hard he hits. It's in how tender he touches. The strength in a man isn't in the hair on his chest. It's in his heart that lies within his chest. The strength of a man isn't in the weight he can lift. It's in the burdens he can carry. There's many such things that could be said. Of the strength that really matters. The strength of character.

[21:14] The strength of a life of faith lived out in action, in practice. What makes a strong man? Sometimes it's when we see those ones who have got the obvious muscles, such as this specimen here.

You see those muscles that are well shaped and so evident. That strength that just stands out from a mile away. How did they develop such a body as this?

They had to go into the gym and have that workout session. They had to put their muscles to work. And that discipline, that self-discipline of that strong training, of that arduous training, so that they could grow stronger in that physical sense of it.

And so too in the spiritual vein. For you and me, how can we grow stronger as a Christian? Where are the strongest Christians on planet Earth today?

They're in those places where it's hard to be a Christian. They're in those places where it's tough to be a Christian. They're in those places where they have to possibly die for the name of Christ.

[22:21] It's in those places where they're imprisoned for being a Christian. It's in those places where they are brutally tortured and hunted and killed for Christ.

That's where the strongest Christians are. And that's why. Because they're disciplined. There's a training there. There's a workout there. They've gone into the gym, as it were, of godliness. And they've trained and they've grown. And for me too, in this fair land, how it's relatively easy to be a Christian. Sometimes it's those stretching times that we need.

Those times of straining are developing you. Making you stronger. So that you can grow. And you can help others going through those things too.

I urge you tonight, when you're feeling like it's tough going, that it's ever more needful that we lean on him and find his strength.

[23:29] Because God is stretching and straining us for a purpose. So that we can be stronger. So we can develop those spiritual muscles. So let's pray. Pray for strength to endure.

To get through. And you will receive that strength. Why? Because he is your strength and power. He himself. Psalm 138.

We see that the psalmist cried, In the day when I cried, thou answerest me, and strengthenest me with strength in my soul. Cry out to him.

Cry out in prayer. Trust him. And develop that strength. Through that suffering time, if need be. As God is developing your spiritual muscles.

Testing you. And exercising your faith. So that it will be stronger. It will be brighter. It will be purer faith. It will be more gold standard faith. And God can develop your strength.

[24:31] Through his word. Joshua was told. Joshua was told, Be strong and very courageous as you meditate. Day and night. In the word.

It's the word. It's the word on which we're grounded. Psalm 119.28. The psalmist said, My soul melteth for heaviness. Strengthen thou me according to thy word.

My soul melteth for heaviness. Strengthen thou me according unto thy word. That was his prayer. Friends, we need to take a stand. Be strong and take a stand.

Be strong and take courage. We need courage. We need courage. The righteous are as bold as a lion. And take action.

Be strong. Our real strength is found in him. He wants to strengthen you. To empower you. My prayer, my heart's prayer, my heart's desire is that Christ will be formed in you.

[25:35] That if by his grace, one or two people that I can touch with my life will be stronger.

At least. That you will be strengthened. That's my prayer tonight. It's his strength that we need. It says, Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee.

Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee. Paul closed Ephesians 6. Talking of the time of spiritual battle.

Talking of spiritual armour to wear. To wear the whole armour of God. And he said this, Finally, my brethren. Be strong in the Lord.

And in the power of his might. Finally, my brethren. Be strong in the Lord. And in the power of his might.

[26:36] Watch ye stand fast in the faith. Quit ye like men. Be strong. Let all your things be done with charity. Let us pray. Dear God, we bless your name.

We thank you, Lord, that your word is filled with these exhortations to strength. And when we're feeling weak, it seems, at least for me, it seems at times so far away to know that strength.

And yet, Lord, it's as we stop depending on ourselves. As we start leaning and trusting in you, that we'll know that strength. Because you are our strength and power.

You are our source. And your word, as we meditate in it, as we feed upon it, as it is the seed that blossoms and flourishes and grows. As we see, Lord, as a tree that is strong, planted by the rivers, we'll see that you are at work in us and in our lives.

We'll see, Lord, that you'll change us. You'll give us the Christ-likeness that we desperately need.

You'll help us, Lord, to have rule over our spirit so that we'll overcome that natural inclination.

[27:48] When the flesh rears its ugly head, we'll tell it that it's dead. And you'll make it dead, Lord. You'll mortify. You'll put it to death. Those things of our flesh and self.

Help us, Lord, to win this battle as our power and strength is found in you. Help us, Lord, to have faith to step out of the boat and to step onto your word. To claim its truth.

To claim its power. Help us, Lord, to find grace. Grace and to grow in grace. Make us strong Christians, we pray.

Help us, Lord, to pray. To find time to pray. To make time to pray. To come and pray. To come and fellowship where we can. That we can be strengthened.

And not only us, but that we can strengthen others too. Give us, Lord, opportunities that we can speak to others. So that we can strengthen others. So that we can be stronger together.

[28:45] And if there's any that have yet to trust you, that they'll know that spark of faith ignited in the heart. Of faith rising up.

Springing up. Faith to trust you. To trust your work. To trust everything you've done. It's everything that we need. It's everything that makes heaven our home.

It's all your grace. And all to your praise. We pray, Lord, help us to realise the truths of your word. Help us to grow. Forgive us, Lord, as we may have failed.

Forgive us, Lord, for our weakness. And yet, it's in our weakness that you can be strong. It's as we come to the end of our own strength. It's as we humble ourselves under your mighty hand.

That you can lift us up. We pray for our brothers and sisters here tonight. For some going through some heavy, heavy times. Some heavy burdens. We pray, Lord, give them strength to bear it.

[29:45] Give them strength to go through. And to get through to the other side. Give us strength, Lord. As we know, the heat will be applied. As it's getting hotter, as it were, in this planet.

It's getting harder to be a Christian. Even in this land. We pray, Lord, give us strength to endure. That you would be glorified. That Christ would be formed in us.

In each of the ones here tonight. Lord, let us have that spirit of prayer. That was talked about earlier. Help us to resign.

To surrender. To come to that place. To receive your strength. We just bow under your mighty hand.

And bless your wonderful name. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.