

Shoes of Iron, and Strength Sufficient A New Year's Promise

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that God equips His people with divine strength and protection, symbolized by 'shoes of iron and brass,' enabling them to endure trials, overcome enemies, and grow spiritually each day.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 33:24-25, Job 28:5-6, Romans 16:20, Psalm 125:1

Topics: "Divine Strength", "Spiritual Warfare", "God's Promises"

Description

In this devotional sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores the rich promise given to the tribe of Asher, applying it to the Christian life as a metaphor for divine strength and protection. He encourages believers to embrace their spiritual journey equipped with 'shoes of iron and brass,' symbolizing endurance, victory over enemies, and continual growth. Spurgeon calls ministers and all workers in God's kingdom to seek spiritual fruitfulness, acceptance among brethren, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. This sermon offers profound encouragement for those facing trials, reminding them of God's faithful provision and empowering grace.

Transcript

"And of Asher he said, Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil. Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." Deuteronomy 33:24-25.

I once heard an old minister say that he thought the blessing of Asher was peculiarly the blessing of ministers; and his eyes twinkled as he added, "At any rate, they are usually blessed with children, and it is a great blessing for them if they are acceptable to their brethren, and if they are so truly anointed that they even dip their foot in oil." Well, well, I pray that all of us who preach the gospel may enjoy this triplet of blessings in the highest sense. If our quiver is not full of children according to the flesh, yet may we have many born unto God through our ministry. May we be blessed by being made spiritual fathers to very many, who shall be brought by us to receive life, pardon, peace, and holiness, through our Lord Jesus. What is the use of our life if it be not so? To what end have we preached unless we see souls born into the family of grace? My inmost soul longs to see all my hearers born anew: this would be my greatest joy, my highest blessedness. Ask for me the blessing of Asher—"Let Asher be blessed with children"; and may the Lord make my spiritual offspring to be as the sands upon the sea-shore.

It is a great blessing from the Lord when our speech is sweet to the ears of saints'when we have something to bring forth which our brethren in Christ can accept, and which comes to them with a peculiar preciousness and power, so that they can receive it, and feel that it is thoroughly acceptable to them. We do not wish to be acceptable to the worldly wise, nor to the error-hunters of the day; but we are very anxious to be pleasant to the Lord's own children'our brethren in Christ. They have a holy taste whereby they discern spiritual meats, and we would bring forth for food that which they will account to be nourishing and savoury. Every minister prays to be "acceptable to his brethren."

And what could we do without the third blessing, namely that of unction? "Let him dip his foot in oil." Oh, for an anointing of the Holy Spirit, not only upon the head with which we think, but upon the foot with which we move! We would have our daily walk and conversation gracious and useful. We wish that, wherever we go, we may leave behind us the print of divine grace. I was asking concerning a preacher what kind of man he was, and the simple, humble cottager, answered me, "Well, sir, he is this kind of man: if he comes to see you, you know that he has been." We must not only have oil in the lamps of our public ministry, but oil in the vessels of our private study. We need the holy oil everywhere, upon every garment, even down to our skirts. I know that there are mockers who scoff at the very mention of unction; but I pray that to myself and my brethren the promise may be fulfilled, "He shall dip his foot in oil." Such a man, anointed with fresh oil, holds an unquestioned office, enjoys an unfailing freshness, and exercises an effectual influence. Wherever he goes you see his footprints, for his foot has been dipped in oil.

Well, now, if these three blessings be good for ministers, they are equally good for all sorts of workers. You in the school, you who visit tract districts, you who manage mothers' meetings, and you who in any shape or way endeavour to make Christ known, may you have the threefold blessing! The Lord give you many spiritual children: may you be blessed with them, and never be without additions to their number! The Lord make you acceptable to those among whom you labour; and the Lord grant you always to go forth in his strength, anointed with his Spirit!

That is the first part of our text, and I am not going to say any more about it, as the second part is that to which I shall call your especial attention. May the Holy Spirit make the promise exceeding sweet to you, and grant you a full understanding of it.

"Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be."

There are two things in the text'shoes and strength. We will talk about these two, hoping to possess them both.

I. "THY SHOES SHALL BE IRON AND BRASS." That is a very great promise, and I fear that I shall not be able to bring out all its meaning in one discourse.

I find that the passage has several translations; and, though I think that which we have now before us is by far the best, yet I cannot help mentioning the others, for I think they are instructive. These interpretations may serve me as divisions in opening up the meaning. I take it as a rule that the Lord's promises are true in every sense which they will fairly bear. A generous man will allow the widest interpretation of his words, and so will the infinitely gracious God.

This promise meant that Asher should have treasures under his feet'that there should, in fact, be mines of iron and copper within the boundaries of the tribe. Metals enrich nations, and help their advancement in many ways. Tribes that possess minerals are thereby made rich, what ever metals those may be; but such

useful metals as iron and copper would prove of the utmost service to the people of that time, if they knew how to use them. Is there any spiritual promise at all in this! Asher is made rich and iron and copper lying beneath his feet. Are saints ever made rich with treasures under their feet? Undoubtedly they are. The Word of God has mines in it. Even the surface of it is rich, and it brings forth food for us; but it is with Scripture as Job saith it is with the earth: "As for the earth, out of it cometh bread: and under it is turned up as it were fire. The stones of it are the place of sapphires: and it hath dust of gold." There are treasures upon the surface of the Word which we may pick up very readily: even the casual reader will find himself able to understand the simplicities and elements of the gospel of God; but the Word of God yields most to the digger. He that can study hard, and press into the inner meaning he is the man that shall be enriched with riches current in heavenly places. Every Bible student here will know that God has put under his feet great treasures of precious teaching, and he will by meditation sink shafts into the deep places of revelation. I wish we gave more time to our Bibles. We waste too much time upon the pretentious, poverty-stricken literature of the age; and some, even Christian people, are more taken up with works of fiction than they are with this great Book of everlasting fact. We should prosper much more in heavenly husbandry if we would "dig deep while sluggards sleep." Remember that God has given to us to have treasures under our feet; but do not so despise his gifts as to leave the mines of revelation unexplored.

You will find these treasures, not only in the Word of God, but everywhere in the providence of God, if you will consider the ways of the Lord, and believe that God is everywhere at work, He that looks for a providence will not be long without seeing one. All events are full of teaching to the man that has but grace and wit to interpret them. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord." There shall be treasures under your feet if your feet keep to the ways of truth. A rich land is the country along which believers travel to their rest: its stones are iron, and out of its bowels thou mayest dig brass. "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right."

The Revised Version has it, "Thy bars shall be iron and brass;" and certainly the original text bears that meaning. "Thy bars shall be iron and brass:" there shall be protection around him. The city gates shall be kept fast against the enemy, so as to preserve the citizens. The slaughtering foe shall not be able to intrude, because, instead of the common wooden bar, which might be sufficient in more peaceful times, there shall be given bars of metal, not easily cut in sunder or removed. Herein I see a spiritual blessing for us also. What a mercy it is, when God strengthens our gates and secures the bars thereof, so that, when the enemy comes, he is not able to enter or to molest us! Peace from all assaults, safety under all alarms, shutting in from all attacks this is a priceless boon. Happy people who have God for their protector! Blessed are they who rest in the sure promises and faithfulness of God, for they may laugh their enemies to scorn. O brethren, how safe are they whose trust is in the living God and in his covenant and promise! Personally I know what this means. I have rested as calmly in the centre of the battle as ever I have reposed in the deepest calm: with all against me I am as quiet in soul as when everyone called himself my friend. It is true "Thy bars shall be iron and brass."

Still, I like the Old Version best, and the original certainly bears it, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass." The Revised Version puts this in the margin He shall have protection for his feet. The chief objection that has been raised to this is that it would be a very unusual thing for shoes to be made of iron and brass. Such a thing is not heard of anywhere else in Scripture, neither is it according to Oriental custom. For that reason I judge that the interpretation is the more likely to be correct, since the protection which God gives to his people is unusual. No other feet shall wear so singular a covering; but those who are made strong in the

Lord shall be able to wear shoes of iron, and the Lord shall give them sandals of brass. As Og, the King of Bashan, was of the race of the giants, and "his bedstead was a bedstead of iron," so shall the Lord's champions wear shoes of iron. Theirs are no common equipments, for they are no common people. God's people are a peculiar people, and everything about them is peculiar. Even if the poetry of the passage would not bear to run upon all fours, there is no reason why it should, since it only relates to shoes. We may be quite content to take the notion of iron and brazen shoes with all its strangeness, and even let the strangeness be a commendation of it. You have peculiar difficulties, you are a peculiar people, you traverse a peculiar road, you have a peculiar God to trust in, and you may, therefore, find peculiar consolation in a peculiar promise: "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass."

With shoes of iron and of brass,

O'er burning marl thy feet shall pass,

Tread dragons down, from fear set free;

For as thy day thy strength shall be.

But what does this mean?"thy shoes shall be iron and brass"? Are there not several meanings? Does it not mean that our feet, tender and unprotected by nature, shall receive protection'protection from God? Our feebleness and necessity shall call upon God's grace and skill, and he will provide for us, and give to us exactly what we, by reason of our feebleness, so much need.

We want to have shoes of iron and brass, first, to travel with. We are pilgrims. We journey along a road which has not been smoothed by a steam-roller, but remains rough and rugged as the path to an Alpine summit. We push on through a wilderness where there is no way. Sometimes we traverse a dreary road, comparable too a burning sand. At other times sharp trials afflict us as if they cut our feet with flints. Our journey is a maze, a labyrinth: the Lord leads us up and down in the wilderness, and sometimes we seem further from Canaan than ever. Seldom does our march take us through gardens: often it leads us through deserts. We are always travelling, never long in one stay. Sometimes the fiery cloudy pillar rests for a little, but it is only for a little. "Forward!" is our watchword. We have no abiding city here. We pitch our tent by the wells and palms of Elim, but we strike it in the morning, when the silver bugle sounds, "Up, and away!" and so we march to Marah, or to the place of the fiery serpents. Ever onward; ever forward; ever moving! This is our lot. Be it so. Our equipment betokens it: we have appropriate shoes for this perpetual journey. We are not shod with the skins of beasts, but with metals which will endure all wear and tear. Is it not written, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass"? However long the way, these shoes will last to the end.

Perhaps I address some friend whose way is especially rough. You seem to be more tried than anybody else. You reckon yourself to be more familiar with sorrow than anyone you know: affliction has marked you for its own. I pray you take home this promise to yourself by faith: the Lord saith to thee, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass." This special route of yours, which is beset with so many difficulties'your God has prepared you for it. You are shod as none but the Lord's chosen are shod. If your way is singular, so are your shoes. You shall be able to traverse this thorny road'to journey along it with profit to yourself, and with glory to God. For your travelling days you are well fitted, for your shoes are iron and brass.

"If the sorrows of thy case

Seem peculiar still to thee,

God has promised needful grace,

'As thy days, thy strength shall be.'

Shoes of iron remind us of military array; they are meant to fight with. Brethren, we are soldiers as well as pilgrims. These shoes are meant for trampling upon enemies. All sorts of deadly things lie in our way, and it is by the help of these shoes that the promise is made good. "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet." Are we not often too much like the young man Jether, who was bidden by his father to slay Zebah and Zalmunna, but he was afraid. We tremble to put our foot upon the neck of the enemy; we fancy that if we should attempt it, we should be guilty of presumption. Let us have done with this false humility, for thus we dishonour the Lord's promise: "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass." Better far to say, "Through thee will we push down our enemies: through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us." Thus we may say without fear, for assuredly "The Lord shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly."

"O my soul, thou has trodden down strength," said the holy woman of old, when the adversaries of Israel had been routed. Thus can our exultant spirits also take up the chant. I also can say, "O my soul, thou has trodden down strength." Yes, believer, with thy foot thou has crushed thy foe, even as thy Lord, who came on purpose that he might break with his foot, even with his bruised heel, the head of our serpent adversary. Be not afraid, therefore, in the day of conflict, to push onward against the foe. Do not be afraid to seize the victory which Christ has already secured for thee. "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass" thou shalt trample down thy foe, and march unharmed to victory.

What a blessing it is when we get self under our feet! We shall have good use for iron shoes if we keep him there. What a mercy it is when you get a sinful habit under your feet! You will need have shoes of brass to keep it there. What a mercy it is when some temptation that you have long struggled with at last falls to the ground, and you can set your foot upon it! You need to have both of your shoes strengthened with iron, and hardened with brass, that you may bruise this spiritual enemy, and crush out its life. Feet shod with sound metal of integrity and firmness will be none too strong in this evil world, where so many, like serpents, are ready to bite at our heels. Only so shod shall we win the victory.

See, the Lord promises that we shall have shoes suitable alike for travelling and for trampling upon enemies!

Next, we have fit shoes for climbing. One interpreter thinks that the sole of the shoe was to be studded with iron or copper nails. Certainly, those who climb would not like to go with the smooth soles which suit us in our parlours and drawing-rooms. There are many instances where a rough tip of iron, or a strong nail in the heel of the shoe, has checked the slipping mountaineer when gliding over a shelving rock, and there he has stayed on the very brink of death. Our spiritual life is an upward climb, with constant danger of a fall. It is a great mercy to have shoes of iron and brass in our spiritual climbings, that should our feet be almost gone, we may find foothold before we are utterly cast down. We ought to climb: the higher our spiritual life the better. It is written of the believer, "He shall dwell on high." We ought not to be satisfied till we reach the highest places of knowledge, experience, and practice. High doctrine is glorious doctrine, high experience is blessed experience, high holiness is heavenly living. Many souls always keep in the plains: the simple elements are enough for them; and, thank God, they are enough for salvation and for comfort. But if you want the richest delight and the highest degree of grace, climb the hills and roam among the mysteries of God, the sublimer revelations of his divine will. Especially climb into the doctrines

of grace: be not afraid of electing love, of special redemption, of the covenant, and all that is contained in it. Be not afraid to climb high, for if thy feet be dipped in the oil of grace, they shall also be so shod that they shall not slip. Trust in God, and you shall be as Mount Zion, which can never be removed. Your shoes shall be iron and brass, for lofty thought and clear knowledge, if you commit your mind to the instruction of the Lord. Receiving nothing except as you find it in the Word, but in a childlike spirit receiving everything that you find there, you shall stand upon your high places. Your feet shall be like hinds' feet, and your place of abode shall be above the mists and clouds of earth's wretched atmosphere of doubt.

Rise, also, to the highest graces and the noblest virtues. As is the food we feed on, such should our actions be. Let us love, for God is love, and as dear children we must be imitators of him in all gentleness, tenderness, and forgiveness. Climb to the heights of self-denial, the summits of consecration. Be as near heaven as is possible for those who dwell on earth. Have you not the shoes to climb with? Wherefore tarry down below?

I will not press this longer upon you, for I hope that your hearts aspire to climb up where your Lord reveals himself in clearer light; but, lest you should be at all afraid of the climbing as the aged man is afraid of that which is high, I would arouse you to a holy bravery, since God has not given you shoes of iron and brass merely to trip over the plains. He means you to climb; your equipments prove it. Will you be as the children of Ephraim, who, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle? Will you be shod with iron, and melt like wax under a little heat of opposition?

Once more. These shoes are for travelling, for trampling, for climbing; they are also made of iron and brass for perseverance. You would not need such shoes for a little bit of a run for a trip up the street and back again. Since the Lord has shod you in this fashion, it is a warning to you that the way is long and weary, and the end is not by-and-by. The Lord has furnished you with shoes that will not wear out. "Old shoes and clouted" were good enough for Gibeonites, but they are not fit for Israelites. The Lord does not mean that you should be arrayed as beggars, or become lame through worn-out shoes. The sacred canticle, in one of its verses, saith, "How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter!" The princes of the heavenly household shall be shod according to their rank and this shall be the case at the end of their journey as surely as at the beginning. Whether Israel traversed sand or rock, the camp never halted because the people had become lame; for the Lord had said "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass." It is a good pair of shoes that lasts a man for forty years; yet there are some of us who can testify that God's grace has furnished us with spiritual shoes of that kind. I can speak of nearly that length of time since I knew the Lord, and I bear my unhesitating witness that I have found the grace of God all-sufficient, and his promises most sure and steadfast.

If we are allowed to live till we touch the borders of a century, or if we even fulfill our hundred years, these shoes would never be too old. These are the sort of shoes that Enoch wore; and was it not for more than three hundred years that he walked with God? He was always walking, but his shoes of iron and brass were never worn out. It matters not, dear friend, how severe may be your trials and troubles, or how long may be your pilgrimage through this wilderness, God, who gives these extraordinary shoes, such as no other has ever fashioned, and such as men are not accustomed to wear, has in this provided you against the utmost of endurance, the extremity of suffering. "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass" does not this symbol signify the best, the strongest, the most lasting, and the most fitting provision for a pilgrimage of trial? Thy shoes shall last as long as thou shalt last. Thou shalt find them as good as new when thou art about to lie down on thy last bed, to be gathered to thy fathers. "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass."

I may be addressing some here that are very low in spirit: they fear that they shall not hold on their way, they are ready to halt, yea, ready to lie down in despair. I trust the way will hold you on when you can hardly hold on your way. May you hear the ring of your iron sandals, and be ashamed of cowardice. They should be iron men to whom God has given iron shoes. I would encourage you to go forward in the way, for you are, by God's grace, made fit for travelling. You are not bare-footed, nor badly shod. You ought to go forward bravely, after your heavenly Father has put such shoes as these upon your feet. You are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and you may trip lightly on your way; and again I say, though that way should be a very long one, you need not think that your provision for the way will fail you. Even to hoar hairs the Lord will be with you. He has made, and he will bear; even he will carry you. Your last days shall be better than your first days. Yea, you shall go from strength to strength through his abounding and faithful love.

I find great difficulty in speaking tonight, because of some failure of my voice; but the divine promise is so sweet that even when poorly uttered it has a music all its own. For fear my voice should quite fail me, I will hasten on to say a few words upon the second point. We have examined the shoes, now let us consider the strength.

II. "AS THY DAYS, SO SHALL THY STRENGTH BE."

This provision is meant to meet weakness. The words carry a tacit hint to us that we have no strength of our own, but have need of strength from above. Our proud hearts need such a hint; for often we poor creatures begin to rely upon ourselves. Although we are weak as water, we get the notion that our own wit, or our own experience, may now suffice us, though once they might not have done so. But our best powers will not suffice us now, any more than in our youth. If we begin to rest in ourselves it will not be long before we find out our folly. The Lord will not let his people depend upon themselves: they may make the attempt, but, as sure as they are his people, he will empty them from vessel to vessel, and make them know that their fullness dwells in Christ, and not in themselves. Remember that, if you have a sense of weakness, you have only a sense of the truth. You are as weak as you think you are; you certainly do not exaggerate your own helplessness. The Saviour has said "Without me, ye can do nothing"; and that is the full extent of what you can do. The Lord promises you strength, which he would have no need to promise you if you had it naturally apart from him. But he promises to give it, and therein he assures you that you need it. Come down from your self-esteem: stoop from the notion of your own natural ability: divest yourself of the foolish idea that you can do anything in and of yourself, and come down to the strong for strength, and ask your Lord to fulfill this promise in your experience, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

The strength which is here promised is to abide through days. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Not for today only, but for tomorrow, and for every day as every day shall come. The longest and the shortest day, the brightest and the darkest day, the wedding and the funeral day, shall each have its strength measured out, till there shall be no more days. The Lord will portion out to his saints their support even as their days follow each other.

"Days of trial, days of grief,

In succession thou may'st see;

This is still thy sweet relief,

'As thy day, thy strength shall be.'

This strength is to be given daily We shall never have two days' grace at a time.

"Day by day the manna fell:

Oh, to learn this lesson well,

'Day by day' the promise reads:

Daily strength for daily needs!"

If I get strength enough to get through this sermon, I shall be satisfied for the present. I do not want strength to get through next Sabbath morning's sermon till that Sabbath morning comes. If I can weather the present storm, I shall not just now require the strength to outlive the storms of all the year 1889. What should I do with this reserve force if I had it? Where would you store away your extra grace? You would put it in the lumber-room of your pride, where it would breed worms, and become an offence. A storage of what you call "grace" would turn into self-sufficiency. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be": this secures you a day's burden and a day's help, a day's sorrow and a day's comfort. After all, what more do we want? If a man has a meal, let him give thanks for it: he does not want two meals at once. If a man has enough for the day, he certainly is not yet in want for tomorrow. He cannot eat tomorrow's food today; or, if he did, it would injure his health, and be no comfort to him. Let us narrow our vision as to the necessities of daily life, not looking so far ahead as to compress into today more evil than naturally belongs to it; for "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Our strength is to be given to us daily.

And then the text seems to say clearly that it will be given to us proportionately, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." A day of little service, little strength; a day of little suffering, little strength; but in a tremendous day—a day that needs thee to play the Samson—thou shalt have Samson's strength. A day of deep waters in which thou shalt need to swim, shall be a day in which thou shalt ride the billows like a sea-bird. Do you not think that this might almost tempt us to wish for days of great trial, in order that we might receive great grace? If we are always to go smoothly, and to receive but little grace in consequence, we shall never rise to the great things of the divine life. We shall be dwarfs, and none shall say, "There were giants in those days." We may not wish to be always children, with boyish tasks and childish duties; it is right we should grow, and that in consequence we should shoulder burdens from which youthful backs are exempt. Who would wish to be always a little child? Great grace will be sent to us to meet our great necessities. And is not that a most desirable thing? I remember that for a long season the Lord was very gracious to me in the matter of funds for the extensive works which I have been called upon to originate and superintend, and I felt very grateful for the ease which I enjoyed; yet it crossed my mind that I was learning less of God than in more trying seasons, and I trembled. Years gone by there were considerable necessities which did not appear to be met at once, and I went with them to God in prayer, and I trusted him, and he supplied my needs in such a wonderful way that I seemed to have the closest intercourse with him. I could most plainly see his hand stretched out to help me. I could see him working for me as gloriously as if he wrought miracles. These were glorious days with me! I cannot tell you what holy wonder often filled my soul when the Lord interposed on behalf of the Orphanage or the College. The record reads so charmingly that unbelievers would never accept it as true. Then God made me by grace like one who steps from the summit of one mountain to another: I stepped across the valleys, leaving the deep places far below. So in my easy seasons I thought to myself, "Everything comes in regularly and abundantly. I am like a little child walking along a smooth lawn. This is but a common, ordinary state of affairs, in which

even a man of no faith could pursue his way. I do not see so much of God, though assuredly I ought to see him as clearly now as ever." I did not wish for necessities, but I remembered how the Lord glorified himself in them, and therefore I half desired them. The regular blessing day by day, almost without need of special prayer, does not constrain you to look to God so vividly as when you gaze down into the deep, dark abyss of want, and feel, "If he does not help me now, I shall soon be in dire distress." This forces forth the living prayer. "Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses." Our great necessities bring God so very near to us, so manifest to our consciousness, that they are an unspeakable blessing. So I did not ask to have a time of need; I hope that I shall never be so foolish as that; but when I found a time of need hurrying up, as I soon did, I felt a special delight in it! I took pleasure in my necessities. My heart cried, "Now I shall see my Lord; now I shall see him again. Now I shall get a hold of that great arm, and hang upon it, and I shall see how the Lord will deliver me in time of need." I did thus lay hold upon my Lord again, and I found him still God All-sufficient, for which I bless his name. In proportion as he sends the trial he sends the help. Be not, therefore, afraid of great trial: on the contrary, look for it, and when it comes, say to yourselves, "Now for great grace. Now for a special manifestation of the faithfulness of God."

Mark, again, that strength will be given to us in all forms. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Our days vary, our trials change; our service varies, too. Our lives are far from being monotonous: they are musical with many notes and tones. Our present state is like chequered work: or, say, as a mosaic of many colours. But the strength that God gives varies with the occasion. He can bestow physical strength, and mental strength, and moral strength, and spiritual strength. He gives strength just where the strength is needed, and of that peculiar kind which the trial demands. We have no need to fear because we feel weak in a certain direction: if we need strength in that special quarter, the strength will come there. "But if I am tried," says one, "in a certain way, I shall fail." No, you will not. "As your days, so shall your strength be." "I am horrified," says one, "at the thought of having to pass through the ordeal of a surgical operation." Do not be horrified at it; for though at the present moment you may be quite unfit for the trial, you will be quite ready for it when it comes. Have you never been in great danger and found yourself cool and calm beyond anything you could have expected? It has been so with me, and I have learned from my experience, not to measure what I shall be, in a trying hour, by what I happen to be just now. The Lord will take care to fit us for our future, and, as our days, so shall our strength be.

I find that some persons read this passage thus: when our days grow many, and we come to the end, yet our strength shall be equal to what it was in the days of our youth. We shall, according to this, find our strength continuing as our days continue. It is a cheering meaning, certainly. The children of God do find that, spiritually, their strength is renewed day by day. The outer man decayeth, that is nature: but the inward man is renewed day by day, that is grace. As thy days are, so shall thy strength continue to be. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." Though days come one after another, so shall strength come with them; there shall be such a continuity of perpetual renewal that the heart shall be strong even to the end of life, and the old man shall know no inward decay.

An hour or so ago, I stood by what will certainly be the death-bed of one of our best friends, and I was cheered and comforted when I heard him so blessedly speaking both of the present with its pain, and of the future with its near descent into the vale of death. He said, "I have no doubt as to my eternal bliss. I have had no doubt no, not a shadow of doubt of my interest in Christ through my long illness. In fact, I have felt a perfect rest of mind about it all. And," he added, "this is nothing more than ought to be, with us

who listen to the glorious gospel, for we live on good spiritual meat. Sound doctrine should make us strong in the Lord. I have not been a hearer of yours for thirty years, and heard of covenant love and faithfulness, to die with a trembling hope. I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him." Thus, dear friends, shall we also be supported, for the brother of whom I speak is a simple-minded man, who makes no pretensions to learning, but is one of our own selves. It will be a great privilege to find that when death's days come—the days of sickness, and decline, and weakness, yet still our strength remains the same. It will be glorious to go from strength to strength, and even in the day of utter physical prostration to find the spirit leaping for joy, in anticipation of the time when it shall be free from the cumbering clay, and shall stretch its wings and fly aloft to yonder world of joy. Yes, as our days our strength shall be.

Come, child of God, be peaceful, be happy in the prospect of the future. Do more, be joyous, and show your joy. You are out of harm's reach, for Christ has you in his hand. You shall never be staggered nor overcome, for the Lord is your strength and your song, and he has become your salvation. This text is a royal banquet for you. Here are fat things full of marrow. Eat abundantly, O beloved. Feel your spirit renewed by the Holy Spirit. Be prepared for whatever is yet to come; for such a word as this, not from me, but from the Lord himself, may gird up your loins for another march towards Canaan; "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days, so shall thy strength be."

I am sorry, very sorry, for those among you who have no portion and lot in such a promise as this. Whatever you may have in this world, you are very poor in losing such a promise as this. You are shoeless, or if you have some wooden sabot, it will soon be worn out. You will never be able to travel to heaven in any shoes that mortal men can make for you. You need to go to the great Father, who alone can say, "Put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." I am sorry for you in your present condition, for you have no strength but your own, and that is a poor piece of weakness. You are troubled even now: what will you do in the swellings of Jordan? The common footmen of daily life have wearied you: what will you do when you have to contend with horses? O souls, what will you do when you are ushered into the presence of the dread mysteries of another world? O sirs, you are without strength; but is not that a grand verse, "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly"? Ungodly as you are, clutch at such a word as that. "Without strength" as you are, yet lay hold upon the Lord's strength. It is for those who have no strength that Christ came into the world. It is for the ungodly that he laid down his life. Come, and trust him. Let him become your strength and your righteousness from this time forth; and may he manifest himself to you in a special and gracious way; and unto his name shall be praise, for ever and ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON'Psalm 37.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"'686, 89 (Part II), 46 (vers. 1.)

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON BELOVED READERS,'To you, one and all, may the New Year be fruitful of blessings. I wish you the text of this sermon as a benediction, so far as it is applicable to you. Specially may your feet be shod with the iron and brass which are promised you, and this will be better than the glass slippers of fortune, or the silver sandals of wealth. For myself, I beg your kind remembrance when you have the ear of "the King." I need restored strength, for I am well, but weak; and for another year of service I need that the right hand of the Lord may be laid upon me, and that he should say to me, "Be strong: fear not." He that has supplied might to our feebleness for so many years will not fail us now. Week by week the loaf will be set before you in this sermon, and we shall together bless the Lord of the feast.

With all the good wishes of the season, in sincerity and truth,
I am, your weekly visitor,
Mentone, Jan 1st, 1889.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ch-spurgeon/shoes-of-iron-and-strength-sufficient-a-new-year-s-promise/>

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