

# Divine Strengthening

by H.J. Vine

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*We need divine strengthening to please God and to walk worthy of the Lord, and this can be received by trusting in God and His riches, and by seeking to live up to the standard of Christ.*

**Scripture:** Job 38:7, Psalm 138:3, Matthew 11:25, Acts 17:26, Ephesians 3:16, Colossians 1:10, Hebrews 5:14, Revelation 1:18

**Topics:** "Holy Spirit", "Divine Power"

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## Description

H.J. Vine preaches about the divine strengthening provided by God according to the riches of His glory, enabling believers to be filled with power by the Holy Spirit in their inner being. The sermon emphasizes the importance of Christ dwelling in our hearts through faith and being reproduced in our lives, leading to endurance, long-suffering, joyfulness, and thanksgiving to the Father. The message highlights the surpassing greatness of God's power displayed in creation, deliverance, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, resulting in moral wealth treasured up by God for His glory.

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## Transcript

1. "According to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts" (Ephesians 3:16-17).
2. "To walk worthily of the Lord, . . . strengthened with all power, according to the might of His glory, unto all endurance and long-suffering with joy, giving thanks" (Colossians 1:10-11).

Often and often we hear the desire expressed that we may be marked by more power. There is no question in the mind as to God's ability to grant us power. What then is wrong? Why is there so much weakness in the things of the Lord? Is it that we do not ask aright? Or is it that we ask for a wrong purpose? Are we putting the great things in the place of the small? Or the small in the place of the great? Again, are we going in the way in which the power of the Holy Spirit operates for our blessing and for God's glory?

It is very evident that there is abundance of power provided for us. Thanks be to God He has not called us by His grace and blessed us everlastingly through our Lord Jesus Christ, and then left us to struggle in our own strength, or rather sink through our own weakness. All that is necessary is freely supplied. Mercy, grace, peace, and strength are given.

And strength is indeed a necessity to the believer who seeks to be true to his Saviour and Lord. He has the raging wind and the boisterous wave to meet, as he presses forward to the glory of God across the storm-swept seas of this life. Unseen powers, with subtlety and fiery dart, seek to hinder his heavenly progress; they cannot stay him from reaching his heavenly goal. But he is cheered by the grace and love of His living Lord. Again and again comes the word: "BE STRONG!" "BE STRONG in the Lord!" BE STRONG in the grace that is in Christ Jesus!

First of all, the greatness of that which grace has freely given to us in Christ is made known to us. True treasure and the things that are excellent are to fill our thoughts; and applying ourselves to these exalted things, which are ours abidingly and eternally, other things will wisely receive the limited attention which is their due, and more time and thought will be given to matters of real value, of eternal import.

To this end, however, we all feel how much we need spiritual power. To please God in this way divine strengthening must be ours according to the riches of the Father's glory, Nothing less will do. It is supremely necessary, if we are to be here according to His perfect and acceptable will concerning us, that we be strengthened according to the might of God's glory. And this, blessed be His holy Name, is the strength which is granted to us in this connection, as I trust we shall be enabled to see.

#### The Mystery Made Known

Grace has saved us, and in Christ Jesus, the Living One at God's right hand, we have redemption and are taken into God's favour. The truth of the mystery, which was previously hidden, is now made known. It was kept a secret from the past generations. Silence was kept as to it during the long times of the ages. It was hidden during those lengthened periods, not in the Old Testament, but in God Himself. It has now been made manifest, and we are encouraged to enter into the full knowledge of this mystery. Not only of the administration of it, but into the very riches of the glory of it, which is Christ in us the hope of glory. Its greatness and blessedness are ours along with our living Lord Jesus Christ. In this mystery "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Once it was hidden in God: now the divine treasury is hidden in it. This marvellous mystery is concerning Christ and the assembly.

Who could have conceived such a thing but a God of love, and grace, and wisdom, and power? Certainly none else could have brought it to pass.

"For sure, no other mind,

For thoughts so bold, so free,

Greatness or strength, could ever find;

Thine only could it be."

That poor "far off" sinners like ourselves should be taken up by divine grace from our low estate, and, becoming the subjects of divine power, be brought into the most exalted associations--yea, into oneness with Christ Himself for His own praise and pleasure, and for the display of the surpassing riches of God's grace--is most wonderful in our eyes: but not too wonderful for such a God as ours.

Something of His glory and power are to be seen in creation; something of His ways and judgments in His dealings with man; something of His government on the earth in Israel; but the fullness of redemption glory will be seen in heavenly splendour and majesty in Christ and the assembly, in the mystery; when, as His

body, the assembly complete shall be His fullness--the fullness of Him who is already the exalted Head over all things.

The whole universe is to be filled by Him with the glory of God, who created all things in order that there might be a scene for the development and display of His glory; the assembly, now blessed in Christ, being the lesson-book of His all-various wisdom to the exalted intelligences in the heavenlies, according to His purpose in Christ Jesus.

It is not surprising, therefore, that we need divine strengthening, seeing that we are so intimately connected with such surpassing glories, centring in Christ. One of old in the sense of the greatness of "the glory of the Lord," connected with earthly government simply, cried to Him for suitable strength, and said "Thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul" (Ps. 138:3). And God will do this also today for those who have to do with greater glory, and who form an integral part of this mystery. But this strength is ours in connection with that of which we have spoken, and not that we may take another way, however good it may seem.

We feel sure that it is just here that many have unconsciously left the King's highway. Some side issue, some paltry things zealously contended for, and these great things slighted. Smallness has been magnified into greatness: and the truly great things of our most holy faith have not received the earnest consideration which our God and Father looks for. If we had rightly considered them, little things would be seen in their relative littleness, and not occupy days and months of precious time, to the neglect of heavenly realities. Pettiness and pride, too, would be displaced, and our happy hearts would be filled to overflowing with the good things freely given to us of God.

It is only by this constant occupation with what is great and good and glorious that we shall also have true spiritual discernment. To meet the difficulties which arise on our heavenly journey regulations and rules and rigid principles are often propounded and laid down; and these are more or less suitable for unregenerate, though "religious" minded men; but we are to feed on the spiritual food which belongs to us if we are to have our "senses exercised for distinguishing both good and evil" (Heb. 5:14). We must go this way if we are to get on and be of real use to our blessed living Lord now.

### Christ Dwelling in the Heart

Divine strengthening has firstly in view our being right inwardly--in our affections and apprehension as to Christ and the greatness and glory of which He is the centre: and secondly that we may be right outwardly--in our walk and life, now, at this very moment. This has been made known as the present thought of the living Head of the assembly for us; and this is the direction in which the Holy Spirit is working today.

We have seen that the purpose of God centres in our Lord Jesus Christ. He is now the Supreme One, the pre-eminent One. This place is His as man consequent upon His work of redeeming love at Calvary. He descended first to the lowest place: He has now ascended to the highest. He is Head over all things, and that in present and eternal relation to the assembly which is so precious to Him, so that every member becomes a necessity to Himself in this connection, as a cherished part of His body.

It is that He may dwell in our hearts through faith, that power, according to the riches of the Father's glory, is granted to us; so that, being strengthened thus in "the inner man" by the Holy Spirit, and being established in love, vitally and characteristically, we may apprehend from the Centre, "with all the saints"

the universal scene of His glory. This could only be possible to those whose faith and affection embraced Christ Himself, who is the centre of that wide range of radiant blessedness, and all those embraced in His love.

We must guard against an idea which is very common, namely, that Christ must reign as King in our hearts. It is not this that He desires, but TO DWELL in the hearts of those He loves so well. The two thoughts are widely different. It is not the thought of His ruling or swaying us; but that He Himself, the loved Object of our hearts may dwell in them through faith; and that the love of Christ, the living love of the One who died for us, may be known to us as a present reality; though, being infinite like Himself, it necessarily remains a love that passes knowledge. What tongue could tell the love of the One Who once gave Himself for the assembly, that she might be His own eternally, to enjoy with Him the universal heritage and the unfading felicities of redemption, and to be to God's glory?

### The Riches of the Father's Glory

It is according to these riches that we are strengthened to this end. But who can fully explain what they are? Not one of us. Yet, thanks be to God, that neither alters them, nor the strength given, which is according to them. Who can tell what life is? or what electricity is? Yet the effects of these things are seen, though the very people who possess them and use them cannot define them. On all sides we see the light, the energy and the power of that which we are speaking of. So, while we cannot explain these riches, we may know the joy of them, and feel their power and see their effects.

We are, however, helped by noticing that the prayer for divine strengthening is addressed to the Father, "of whom every family in the heavens and on the earth is named" (Eph. 3:15). Let this be weighed carefully. It will enable us to get some thought of the marvellous magnitude of the Father's riches and resources. It is not enough to say, "God is omnipotent," and then leave the consideration of these matters. As our Father who deeply loves us, He desires that His own should be interested, and become intimate with His things, even though we cannot explain them all. "The knowledge of the holy is understanding." "Also, that the soul be without knowledge it is not good."

Now the only One who could properly name every family in the heavens and on the earth is the One who knows perfectly their separate and entire constitution and character. The Father does this, since He has given being and nature to each one of them. He therefore must necessarily know them all thoroughly, and so be able to give them name accordingly. Let us think what vast and varied riches and resources must be His to give being to all these families. So multiform are they in design and distinction and beauty and organism: and yet so uniform in purpose and plan and object and destiny.

Think of the fiery seraphic family in their holy exaltedness. Think of the glorious cherubic family in their governmental greatness. And then of the angels in their supernal strength. And coming to the earth, think of the patriarchal families; and of the families of the tribes of Israel; then of those of the nations, and of the peoples which are afar off, All of them in their diverse distinctness and in their objective oneness are His handiwork, and are to be brought under our Lord Jesus Christ. Could we fully understand the astonishing elements which must make up their constitution; could we know the wonders of their entire being, we might then obtain some small idea of His riches, according to which divine strength is granted today, to those who form the assembly. But these riches, like Himself, are marked by infinitude; and, therefore, though we may get some apprehension of them, yet they must ever surpass our comprehension.

One of old sang, "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches." Diligent scientists know a little of some of these. But only those who are taught of the Holy Spirit have any knowledge at all of the abiding riches of which we speak; and they only receive the strength which is, according to them, in "the inner man." We have simply to trust our God and Father for this, who will never fail us, as we delight ourselves in the Lord and His things. This will not make us merely mystical, it will produce proper practice.

### Purposefulness

In the Old Testament we read of one servant of the Lord who was enabled to see the divine glory. His name is Ezekiel, which means "Strengthened of God." He saw the glorious cherubim in their great splendour. He saw their wide wings and their high wheels, with the clear crystal-like firmament above them. Higher up still he saw the glowing sapphire throne; and as the appearance of a Man above upon it. With the colour of amber and the appearance of fire, it had brightness round about, and the brightness was like the rainbow in the showery cloud.

After viewing its various movements, Ezekiel saw its glorious return to the earthly metropolis for blessing. "The earth shined with His glory" (43:2). And the glory of the Lord filled the house of God at Jerusalem. The name of the city from that day is JEHOVAH SHAMMAH--THE LORD IS THERE (48:35).

It should be noticed that Ezekiel saw the glory return to the city over the eastern mount--the mount of Olives. The last time the feet of our blessed Lord stood there He was rejected by the world, and He is still the rejected One. From that spot on earth He ascended to the right hand of God, to "the right hand of the throne of the greatness in the heavens." He is still there, the living One; the Man in the glory, rejected from the earth. When He returns to it, we are told, "His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4). Coming again to that same spot, power will mark His return: not lowliness and humiliation as before. A violent earthquake will introduce His royal reign of righteousness upon this earth. The assembly, His body and His bride, will have been translated to glory before that time; but now, while she awaits that moment, divine strengthening is granted to us in "the inner man," so that we may see by faith in the power of the Spirit the glorious greatness of that of which Christ is the centre, and that He may dwell in our hearts, though outcast by the world. Ezekiel saw the glory on the earthly side: we are enabled to view it in connection with the heavens as well as the earth--the universal glory. May we enter into all this with true purpose of heart. This is what is needed on our side. It is no question of feeling strong; for, said Paul, "When I am weak, then am I strong."

We are to walk worthy of the Lord; to live well-pleasing to Him, and strength is given to enable us so to do. Men cannot see Christ in our hearts. They may see Him, however, in our lives, and the second side of divine strengthening has reference to this.

The Lord Jesus Christ was altogether pleasing to the Father when on earth. Inwardly and outwardly, all was harmonious. In the sweet-savour offerings (see Lev. 1:9) we are given a beautiful foreshadowing of this. "His inwards" and "His legs," though distinguished very definitely, were nevertheless put "together" in the offering. The Saviour said of Himself, "I am altogether that which also I say to you" (John 8:25, N.Tr.). This was, if we might so say, natural to Him, but it is not so with any of us, however much we may have grown spiritually; therefore prayer and waiting upon God for fresh grace and strength is continually necessary.

Inconsistencies often manifest themselves, but where the discordance is rightly felt, the soul turns to Him who can afresh give it touch and tone, strengthening and tuning it, so that the heart makes melody to the Lord.

Even Peter, who inwardly knew the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who called sinners of the Gentiles to himself, walked outwardly at variance with this at Antioch, so that Paul withstood him (Gal. 3:14). And John, too, who cherished in his heart the love of Jesus for him, went off with the others when the Lord was smitten. Also Paul, whose faith and love were so strong, could, notwithstanding that, pursue a path against which he was warned by the Holy Spirit. If such dissonance was seen in these honoured apostles, how much more so with us. True is the word, "In many things we offend all" (James 3:2). Therefore we need to pray about these things, waiting upon our God and Father in the sense of His grace and love. The standard, however, must not be lowered. Christ is the standard. We must not measure ourselves by one another. That is folly. Our experience may be far below the standard, still we must not endeavour to bring it down to our experience but seek, through divine grace and strength, that our experience may be brought up to the standard. This will be so fully one day, thanks be to God.

#### True Treasure

We are strengthened, then, in the second sense of which we speak, with all power by the Holy Spirit that we may be walking here well pleasing to God. The strength given is according to the might of God's glory, so that we may be marked by endurance, long-suffering, joyfulness, and a spirit of thankfulness. These are very great qualities, princely valuables, enduring riches, incomparably better than this world's wealth which perishes. This must be so, seeing it takes such power and might to produce them.

To this end we are divinely strengthened. Not as the mighty men of old, who, before Christ came, were empowered like Samson to smite their enemies hip and thigh, laying thousands low in the dust at their feet. Not like David who could sing of the power by which he had "run through a troop," and "leaped over a wall," and overthrown all his foes. Neither is it the power which the preacher receives, to herald, it may be in trumpet tone, the glad tidings of grace for the guilty, gathering the wanderers to the Saviour. None of these, right and proper in their place, are in view in the divine strengthening of which we speak.

So great is this work of God that nothing short of power according to the very might of His glory will do, even as it takes strength according to the riches of the Father's glory in the first instance. Not that we may DO some great thing as men speak: but that we may BE to the pleasure of our God and Father, outwardly as well as inwardly. He loves us so much, that He puts all this greatness into operation on our behalf, so that this priceless preciousness may be produced He takes pleasure in His children. May we then seek progress in this direction to please Him. "A wise son maketh a glad father." "My son, if thine heart be wise, My heart shall rejoice, even Mine." "A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength." "By knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches." These are true treasures indeed.

It is important that we understand this exceedingly great matter, for moral wealth is little esteemed today. Material wealth claims the attention of most men.

Let it be remembered that even Saul had power come upon him, but he was far from being pleasing to God as to his own moral state. Judas, one of "the twelve," like the rest, would have the power of preaching and healing upon him, but he was "a demon," nevertheless it is a new kind of power which is operating now, making us spiritual ourselves, and producing prosperity of such sort that gives delight to the heart of

God. It makes Christ, His preciousness and His love, dear to our hearts, and then reproduces Him in our lives.

We are dependent upon God for it all, and we may be deeply thankful that this is so. Some there are in the affairs of this life who have others dependent upon them. And though they would fain meet all the need of these for whom they love and care, yet it is often the case that they are unable to do so; not through lack of love, but through lack of means. It is not so with God and ourselves. His love truly is infinite, and so also are His resources and His power. Far more abundantly than we can ask or even think, He is able to do, "according to the power which works in us." This is the One we are dependent upon. What encouragement is here, even for the feeblest of His own. Let our faces be but turned in the right direction, and spiritual prosperity will surely follow.

A man once said to me, "I know what you preach is right." I asked him, "How is that?" In reply he told me that he was brought up in a district where a well-known servant of the Lord lived and laboured. He said he had watched his life, and what he saw of that convinced him of the truth. I know this servant of Christ, and he is as watchful of his state and behaviour as he is also of his service. This life preaching is open to all of us. And often those who confess Christ as a result of public preaching have been previously prepared through this. How often, too, our own souls have been cheered and elevated by intercourse with some gentle saint of God, to whom Christ is everything, but who has not been called to public service. Great, very great indeed is this side of the truth. This living fruitfulness, this wealthy treasure brings true blessing to others and glory to God.

#### The Might of God's Glory

And what can be said of the might of His glory through which all this is brought to pass? If we consider the creation which God has constructed, we see some display of His might. The works which men have piled up, with such skill and power, pale into insignificance in the presence of His handiwork. They are dwarfed before the great works of God. Those far-spanning heavens were spread out by His fingers. With their glittering hosts--the shining stars and planets and moons and nebulae and comets flaming--they speak of the might of Him who made them all. Yea, the blazing constellations together, and the milky procession of heavenly bodies without number bear witness to His power. And the deep foundations of the earth were laid by Him: He also raised up the mighty mountains which tower above. Their ponderous mass are but an atom in His sight. The flowing river and restless sea are waters of His fashioning. The heavens and the earth alike are telling forth His power.

So also did the deliverance of groaning Israel from the cruel slavery of Egypt. Marvellous things He did in their sight as He laid bare His mighty arm. Pharaoh was raised up "for this same purpose," that He might show His power to them, and that His name might thus be declared throughout all the earth (Rom. 9:17). He smote the sea and cleaved them a dry path through the watery deep. He gave them drink from the rock, and rained them down bread from heaven He sustained them in a wilderness, and He planted them in a land of plenty. All this tells of His power.

The nations of the earth also are His. Their thrones, their times, and their boundaries also, are appointed by Him. Like the waters of the sea, they must stay where He wills; they cannot pass His commandment. His is the might and the power seen in all these things.

It is, however, in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ that the greatest exhibition of His power is seen. Christ had taken upon Himself the settlement of the question of sin. That involved His death. But was

there a power great enough in the universe to take Him out of death? Here is a tremendous issue, for Satan "has the might of death" (Heb. 2:14, N.Tr.). Could Christ be raised from among the dead? Yes, thank God! And He has been raised! He is now the Living One, who once became dead to effect our everlasting deliverance. It is the display of "the surpassing greatness of His power towards us who believe, according to the working of the might of his strength, which He wrought in Christ in raising Him from among the dead" (Eph. 1:19-20). Here are strength, might, energy, and power all combined together to secure this momentous victory of resurrection in the face of a dreadful foe. It is here we see God's greatest display of power. And in result a universe of glory is secured. The One who was raised is already exalted to universal supremacy; and this victorious power will continue to work "towards us who believe" until Christ's body is complete, and exalted to share in His glory.

At the sight of creation power the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7). This is the earliest singing we are told of. The next was at the sight of delivering power, when God saved Israel. Then they sang of the triumph of the Lord: "Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power!" Of "all nations," Paul proclaimed, "the power of God which made them, to dwell on the face of the earth, and determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation" (Acts 17:26). But the power seen in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ outstrips them all. As He stands before us at dawn on the first day of the week, a Man in resurrection life He is the Firstfruits from among the dead, and is the Pattern of what the rest of the harvest shall be like, in bodies immortal, incorruptible, and glorious. In heavenly and spiritual bodies clothed with honour and power we shall be like Him. Our God who has already garnered the glorious First-fruits will not fail to gather to the glory all the rest. Our faith stands not "in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." He has secured everything in Christ raised from among the dead, who Himself now says to His own, "Fear not! I am the First and the Last, and THE LIVING ONE! and I became dead, and behold, I am living to the ages of ages, and have the keys of death and of hades" (Rev. 1:18, N.Tr.).

### The Result of Divine Strengthening

But before that day comes that day of gladness and glory; even now between His being glorified and the glorification of the assembly; the great result of divine strengthening is being brought to pass. The moral wealth of which we have spoken is already being stored. Riches of priceless worth are being treasured up by our God and Father. They will be found to praise and honour and glory in the day of Jesus Christ. Great indeed will be the accumulated result of the divine strengthening, granted to us of God according to the might of His glory. Let this be understood. For what will be left in this world, after all the subjects of this work of God are taken home to glory? Where will Christ and His love be known in worshipping hearts then? Where will renewed minds joyfully apprehend the vast reaches of His glory? Where will patience, endurance, long-suffering, with joyfulness and thanksgiving to the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ, be found, then? Where, indeed? Can much of it be seen even now? whilst the salt of the earth and the light of the world are still here? What rapid corruption, what dense darkness will immediately follow the taking up of the assembly from this world to be with Christ.

Look already at the feverish restlessness of the people about us! See the godless rush for pleasure on all hands! Mark, notwithstanding, the dissatisfaction which popularly prevails! Agitation is rife in the world's religious, political, commercial, social, and even--sad to say--family circles! Impatience, greed, selfish strife, distress and disorder, spiritism and profanity, passion and pretension, are seen nearly everywhere! What a conflagration will follow all this! The ruddy fires of revolution are ready to burst forth into flames of destruction, with terrific violence! If the assembly was caught away to heaven now, what could hinder the

terrible cataclysm which thoughtful men feel is coming and scripture foretells? Knowing these things beforehand, beloved brethren, what purposefulness and prayerfulness should mark us, as those who are strengthened to be here at this present time for God's pleasure.

It is as our hearts behold the beauty of our Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoice in His love, that this will be produced in us. Wave after wave, storm after storm beat upon His holy head; yet, even at such a time, He could raise a note of praise to the Father, who had hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them to babes (Matt. 11:25); and again, He could say, I do always those things which please the Father. We are to "look steadfastly on Jesus." He endured the cross, having despised the shame; for the joy of the future was before Him. And He is now "set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Endurance, long-suffering, with joyfulness and thanksgiving to the Father, marked Him in perfection.

It is because we belong to Him, because we are His co-heirs through God's grace, that we are the subjects of the work of God now; so that there may be a worthy result, for the everlasting joy and satisfaction of our God and Father. Divine strengthening is therefore ours:

1. THAT CHRIST MAY DWELL IN OUR HEARTS THROUGH FAITH,
2. THAT CHRIST MAY BE REPRODUCED IN OUR LIVES.

That having Christ, who is the Object of God's purpose, in our hearts thus, and being established in love, we may apprehend with all the saints the glorious greatness of which He is the Centre: and that walking here as those that are His, we may do so with endurance and long-suffering, with joyfulness, giving thanks to the Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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