

Strength for a New Year

by J.R. Miller

J.R. Miller emphasizes the importance of seeking God's strength through faith, Scripture, and community as we face the challenges of a new year.

Scripture: Isaiah 40:31, Matthew 11:28, Philippians 4:13, James 1:17

Topics: "Strength in Weakness", "Trusting God"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the importance of making each year count by striving for growth and not settling for complacency. He acknowledges the weariness and discouragement that often accompany Christian service, but reassures that God's strength is available to those who seek it. Miller explains that this strength comes through various means, including Scripture, human love, and direct divine intervention. He encourages believers to wait upon the Lord, trusting in His love and guidance, to renew their strength continually. Ultimately, he reminds us that God equips us for every challenge we face, ensuring we are never alone in our struggles.

Transcript

We ought to make something of every year. They should be like new steps on the stairs, lifting our feet a little higher. We ought not to live any two years on the same plane. To be content with any attainment even for two days, is not living at our best.

Many Christians grow faint and weary in their tasks and duties. Routine is intensely wearisome. Tasks are large and exacting, life is dreary in its monotony, work seems oftentimes in vain. We sow, and do not reap. We find disappointment and discouragement at many points. Hopes bright today -- lie like withered flowers tomorrow. Life seems full of illusions. Youth has its brilliant dreams which come to nothing. Work is hard. He who saves his life, loses it.

The price of success in any line, is the losing of self. We must wear ourselves out, if we would do good. He who takes care of himself, and withholds himself from exhausting toil and sacrifice -- makes nothing of himself. It cost Christ Calvary to redeem sinners. The mind that was in Christ Jesus must be in us, if we would be his co-worker in saving the lost. So we grow faint and weary in our service for Christ. It cost Christ Calvary to redeem sinners. The mind that was in Christ Jesus must be in us -- if we would be his co-worker in saving the lost.

But we can be strong. God has strength for us. How does his strength come to us? It comes to us in many ways. James tells us that every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father of lights. No matter, then, how the strength comes to us -- it really comes from God. We may find it in a book, whose words, as we read them, warm the heart and freshly inspire us for struggle or service. We may find it in a friendship-whose cheer and companionship and helpfulness fill us with new courage and hope. Far more than we understand, does God strengthen us and bless us through human love. He hides himself in the lives of those who touch us with their affection. He looks into our eyes through human eyes, and speaks into our ears through human lips. He gives power to us in our faintness, and hope in our discouragement -- through the friends who come to us with their love and cheer.

The Bible tells us a great deal about the ministry of angels in the olden days. They came with their encouragement to weary or struggling ones. After our Lord's temptation, angels came and ministered to him in his faintness. In his agony in Gethsemane, an angel appeared, strengthening him. No doubt angels come now to minister to us and strengthen us -- but they come usually in human love.

But God's strength is imparted in other ways. It comes through his words in Scripture. We are in sorrow, and, opening our Bible we read the assurance of divine love, the promise of the divine help and comfort -- that God is our Father, that our sorrow is full of blessing, that all things work together for good, to God's child. As we read, and believe what we read, and receive it as all for us -- there comes into the soul a new strength, a strange calmness, a holy peace -- and we are at once comforted.

Some day we are discouraged, overwrought, vexed by cares, fretted by life's myriad distractions, weary and faint from much burden-bearing. We sit down with our Bible and God speaks to us in its words of cheer:

"Let not your heart be troubled.

"Fear not, for I am with you."

"Cast your burden upon the Lord."

"Peace I leave with you."

"My grace is sufficient for you."

And as we ponder the words -- the weariness is gone; we feel that we are growing strong; hope revives, courage returns. One who reads the Bible as God's own Word, and hears God's voice in its promises, assurances, commands, and counsels -- is continually strengthened by it.

But there is something better than even this. God is a real person and he comes into our lives with all his own love and grace. The prophet tells us this: "He gives power to the faint; to him who has no might -- he increases strength." This means nothing less than that there is a direct importation of divine strength for God's fainting and weary ones on the earth. This is a wonderful revelation. It tells us that the very power of Christ is given to us in our weakness, passed from his fullness -- into our emptiness.

One may stand by us in our trouble and may make us a little stronger by his sympathy and love, by his encouragement and cheer; but he cannot put any portion of his strength or joy, into our heart. Christ, however, gives us strength, and imparts of his own life. What the vine is to its branch -- Christ is to us. If the branch is hurt in any way, bruised, broken, its life wasted -- the vine pours of its life into the wounded

part, to supply its loss and to heal it. That is what Christ does. He gives power to the faint. His strength is made perfect in our weakness. The greater our need -- the more of Christ's grace will come to us. Therefore there are blessings which we shall never get -- until we come into experiences of trial. We shall never know God's comfort -- until we have sorrow. And as we learn what grief is -- we shall learn also how God gives strength and consolation in grief.

How can we make sure of receiving this promised strength? The answer is: "Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." What is it to wait upon the Lord? It means . . .

to trust God patiently,

to believe in God's love,

to accept God's guidance,

to keep near God's heart,

to live in unbroken fellowship with God, leaning upon his arm, drawing help from him. Prayer is part of waiting upon God. When we go to him in our prayers -- instantly we receive a new supply of grace.

As we wait upon God, abide in Christ, keep our fellowship with him unbroken -- there flows from him to us, into our lives, in unbroken stream -- strength according to our needs. When we are strong -- the blessing given is less; but when we are weak and faint -- the gift of power is increased. As the waters of the sea pour out into every bay and channel, every smallest indentation along its shore, so God's strength fills every heart and is linked to him. Of his fullness we receive, and grace for grace.

Note also the word "renew" in the promise. "Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." As fast as the strength is exhausted -- it is replenished. As fast as we give out -- God gives anew to us. It is like the widow's barrel of meal and cruse of oil, which could not be emptied -- but which were filled up again, as supplies were drawn from them. We are to go on with our work, with our struggle, with our doing and serving -- never withholding what duty demands, never sparing ourselves when the calls of love to God or man are upon us, sure that, waiting upon God, we shall ever renew our strength. We are in living communication with him who made the stars, and calls them by their names, and holds all the universe in being, who faints not nor is weary. He is behind of us all the while -- all his fullness of life, all his important strength -- and every emptying of life from us is instantly replenished, for he gives power to the faint.

Thus it is when we give to others in Christ's name; he fills the emptiness. "Give, and it shall be given unto you," is the Master's word. Thus it is when sorrow takes our loved ones out of our life. We think we can never go on any more, that the sun can never shine for us again, that we can never rejoice or sing as before, that we can never take up again our work, our tasks. But God does not leave the place empty.

We need to be strong, to be always strong -- strong in purpose, strong to meet temptation. Strong for work, strong for holy living, strong in the bearing of sorrow, strong in influence among men. We need to walk erect and unwearied along life's paths, worthy followers of Christ. We do not want to be stumbling and falling every day. The call of God to us all is: "Be strong!" But we are conscious of weakness. We cannot stand against the forces of evil which ever assail us. We cannot walk erect and steadfast under the burdens of life. What can we do?

Over all the unopened year, God casts his light. There can be no experience till the year ends, for which there will not be strength. God never gives a duty, but he gives also the needed strength to do it. He never lays on us a burden -- but he will sustain us under it. He never sends a sorrow, but he sends the comfort to meet it. He never calls to any service, but he provides for its performance. We need only to be sure that we wait upon God, and then all the strength we shall need will be given, as we go on, day by day.

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