

The Duty of Being Strong

by J.R. Miller

The duty of being strong is not just a personal goal, but a divine calling that can be fulfilled through abiding in Christ and living in unbroken fellowship with him.

Scripture: Psalm 73:26, Isaiah 40:31, Matthew 11:28-30, John 15:5, Romans 8:37, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Ephesians 6:10, Philippians 4:13, 2 Timothy 2:1, 1 Peter 5:10

Topics: "Strength in Weakness", "Divine Empowerment"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the duty of being strong, asserting that strength is a moral obligation rather than a mere gift. He acknowledges human weakness but insists that God empowers us to overcome our struggles, urging believers to seek strength through faith and divine connection. Miller illustrates that strength can be found in scripture, through the support of friends, and ultimately through a personal relationship with Christ, who imparts His strength to us. He encourages a mindset that views obstacles as opportunities for growth, reinforcing that true strength comes from trusting in God and living in fellowship with Him. The sermon concludes with the powerful reminder that in our weakness, we can find strength through God's grace.

Transcript

There is a duty of being strong. Strength is not a mere happy gift that falls to the lot of certain favored people, while others are doomed to weakness. Never is weakness a duty. Over and over again in the Scriptures are men urged to be strong--but they are never urged to be weak. Weakness is never set down among the virtues, the beautiful things, the noble qualities of life. Everywhere are we urged to be strong. At the same time, no fact is oftener reiterated, than that of human weakness. We belong to an imperfect family. We tire easily. We faint under burdens. We are overcome by our sorrows. Life's struggles are too hard for us. We are bruised reeds--not weak only--but crushed and wounded in our life.

Yet, while these painful facts are kept before us continually, a divine voice is ever heard sounding like a trumpet over the fields of battle and defeat--calling us to be strong. Strength is the ideal of a noble living. Victoriousness is the characteristic of a life of faith. Indeed, the only hope of blessedness, is through overcoming. Heaven's heights lie beyond the plains of earthly struggle, and can be reached only by one who is strong and who overcomes.

If this were all of the Bible teaching on the subject, we might say that it is impossible for us to realize it. But there is more of the lesson. God will help us to be strong. "He gives power to the faint." We are to be more

than conquerors, not in ourselves--but in him who loves us. We are to be strong "in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." It is possible for us, in all our weakness and faintness, to receive strength from the divine fullness.

HOW to get this strength from God--is therefore an important and practical question for us all. It comes to us in many ways. We may find it in a book whose words, as we read them, warm our hearts, and freshly inspire us for struggle or service. We may find it in a friend whose companionship and helpfulness fill us with new courage and hope. Far more than we understand, does God strengthen 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 highest and greatest of all the comings of God to men--was in a human life, when the Son of God tabernacled in the flesh. And ever since, God is coming to us in other human lives. Yet often we do not recognize the love and the help as from him, because we see no glory blazing in the faces of his messengers.

God's strength is imparted also through his words of promise. You are in sorrow, and opening your Bible you read the assurance of divine love and comfort--that God is your Father, that your sorrow is full of blessing, that all things work together for good to God's children. As you read, and believe what you read, and receive it as for you--there comes into your soul a new strength, uncommon calmness, a holy peace--and you are comforted.

Or some day you are discouraged, overwrought, vexed by cares, fretted by life's distractions, weary and faint from much burden bearing. You sit down with your Bible, and God speaks to you in its words of cheer and hope; and as you ponder over the words, the weariness is gone, you feel yourself growing strong, hope revives, courage returns. The words of God with their divine assurances, bring strength to fainting ones.

But there is something even better than this. God is a real person; and he comes into our life, if we will admit him, with his own love and strength. The teaching of the Bible is that there is an actual impartation of strength from God, to his weak and weary children. This is not possible in human friendship. The best that we can give to others is cheer, encouragement, sympathy. A mother, with all her love and yearning for her child, cannot really give any of her strength to it in its weakness. This, however, Christ, as the manifestation of God, does to his friends in their faintness, actually imparting to them of his own life.

When a branch of a vine is hurt, bruised, broken, its life wasted--the vine pours of its abundant life into the wounded part, to replenish the loss and to heal the hurt. That is what Christ does. Virtue went out of him to heal the sick. Virtue comes from him always when the hand of faith touches the hem of his garment, and becomes life and strength in the heart that is thus brought into vital relation with him. His strength is made perfect in our weakness. The greater our need, the more of his grace will come to us. "As your days--so shall your strength be."

The essential thing is our being really united to Christ. "Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." Waiting upon the Lord means trusting him implicitly and patiently, believing in his love, keeping near his heart, living in unbroken fellowship with him. True praying is waiting upon God. It brings the life up close to him, and from his fullness flows the strength to fill our emptiness. One who goes to God in prayer with his weakness, receives help and blessing.

The simple teaching of the Bible, is that as we abide in Christ, in unbroken fellowship--there flows from him to us, into our deepest lives, in continuous stream, strength according to our need. "My strength is made perfect in your weakness." As the waters of the sea pour out into every bay or channel, pressing up into every slightest indentation along the shore--so God's strength flows into every life that is lived in him, filling all its emptiness.

This teaching gives us the secret of strength. It tells us how it is possible for us to be strong, though in ourselves we are so weak. Indeed, so wonderful is the divine grace, that each believer in Christ can say in truth, "When I am weak--then am I strong." Our very weakness becomes a blessing, because it makes room for the power of God, and this in us makes us strong. We never need faint nor fall, for our strength will be renewed as fast as it is used. We may go on with our work, with our struggle, with our doing and serving, never withholding what the duty of the moment demands, never sparing ourselves when the calls of love to God or to our fellows are upon us, sure that, waiting upon God--we shall receive all the strength we need.

One spoke the other day of the surprises of a great sorrow which had just been passed through. It was all surprises--for it was the first sorrow; but strangest of all was the surprise of grace which came to brighten the darkness, and to fill the loneliness with love. Some of it came through human affection--friends had brought wondrous warmth and tenderness. "I never knew I had so many friends, until my bereavement came." Some of it came through words of divine comfort which had been read or heard a hundred times before--but which now, in the darkness, for the first time revealed their precious meaning. But besides these, and most wonderful of all, there came a strange blessing of heavenly peace, which seemed to fill the bereft hearts as with an unseen presence of love, pouring itself through all the home as a holy fragrance. Thus it is that those who wait on the Lord have their strength renewed in every need, in every sorrow.

There is one other secret of being strong, which must not be overlooked in our study of this subject--we must be strong in our own heart. A great deal of weakness is unnecessary. Sometimes resignation is a virtue; it is so when the hand of God is upon us in such a way as to leave us no alternative. But very often resignation is not a virtue--but weakness rather, which drags down with it many a possibility of power. Many times what people imagine to be submission to the will of God is only surrender to weakness, when there is really no need for surrender.

Someone counsels us to rename our obstacles, 'opportunities', considering each as a gymnasium bar on which to try our strength. In this attitude toward hindrances, obstructions, burdens, and weakness itself--lies a wonderful secret of victoriousness. This spirit makes obstacles stepping-stones on which to climb upward. This is really an element of Christian faith. Believing that God will make us strong, we go on as if we were already strong--and as we move forward the strength comes.

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