**Faith and Strength**

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*But the Lord is faithful, he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one.* 2 Thessalonians 3:5
As I read Paul’s encouragement to the church at Thessalonica, two things crossed my mind. That Paul was writing to real people, just like us who were facing so many challenges. Then I wondered, “how do you strengthen us, Lord?” I know it happens, but exactly how does it happen? What can we do to receive this strength?

There are so many amazing scriptures that talk about God’s strength. Lately, I have met many weary people. Life’s circumstances overwhelm some, some are victims of the enemy’s lies, some are at a crossroads and need courage to pick a path. In Exodus 15:2, Moses declares: *The Lord is my strength and my song and has become my salvation.*In someway, Moses has learned that the Lord is his strength. When I think I am strong, I don’t look for God’s strengthening. I keep relying on my own until I can’t. Then I call out to the Lord—help! Then, like David, who encouraged the Levites and priests with a song of thanksgiving in 1 Chronicles 16:11 to *seek the Lord and his strength, seek his presence continually. (ESV)* It is a good thing to seek him and his strength. Don’t shy away from simply asking for it. It is our privilege as believers.

Really, we must accept and know that his strength is available to us. It is a matter of releasing our faith and trusting that these words are true. David wrote Psalm 23:3. He*renews my strength*. When does this happen? When we take the time to lie down in the green pastures, he provides! If we discover we are lacking strength, it’s important to spend time in his presence. Sometimes it is humbling to admit we are weak, but unless we admit it, we can’t do anything about it.

After we realize we are needy and weak, then we must ask for him to strengthen us. Then we need to listen. The wise God may suggest we go to bed earlier. He may suggest a particular passage in scripture to meditate on or to put on some worship music. He may show us an area where sin has encroached, and we need to repent. Sin sucks life from us. He may show us where our priorities need to be shifted. It is important that we implement any changes the Holy Spirit shows us.

Sometimes, he may want you to head into the battle and trust him for the strength to be victorious. Have you read Hebrews 11: 32-34 lately? *How much more do I need to say? It would talk too long to recount the stories of the faith of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and all the prophets. By faith, these people overthrew kingdoms, ruled with justice, and received what God had promised them. They shut the mouths of lions, quenched the flames of fire, and escaped death by the edge of the sword. Their weakness was turned to strength. They became strong in battle and put whole armies to flight.*These heroes of the faith became strengthened in the battle! So, he might tell you to stand up and fight the good fight of faith. Often, we may feel the only way to get stronger is to rest, but apparently, it is not so. Exercise your faith muscle and trust him.

We also gain strength through fellowshipping with others. Sharing our concerns with another helps lighten our load and infuses us with strength. Ask people to pray for you. Or reach out and help others. It can actually increase our own strength. We were not created to do life alone.

I want to remind us of Paul’s situation in 2 Corinthians 12:9 *Each time he said, “My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness. So not I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*We need to remind ourselves, he may not remove our weaknesses, but he may choose to show forth his strength in them.

No matter what, he wants us to grow closer to him. He is delighted when we come to him, asking for help and strength. Lean on him, my friends. He is more than able to get us through any situations, if we simply trust him and follow his ways. Do not let discouragement overtake you. Run to him, don’t let condemnation, fear, or anxiety keep you away from your Heavenly Father.

*Father, I know what it is like to feel weak and needy. I am so grateful that you are available in our weakness to show forth your strength. Help us to run to you, seek you and rest in your presence when we feel depleted. Show us any areas where we are allowing our strength to be wasted, In Jesus’ Name, amen.*

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