

The Lord
is the
STRENGTH
of my
Life.

PSALM 27

In desperation and need, people of faith are known to cry out, “God, please give me strength....” Even non-Christians are known to make such impassioned requests for God’s supernatural empowerment or intervention on their behalf. When people pray for “strength,” what are they really asking God to give them? Some might be asking for physical ability beyond their own, or financial help, wisdom, direction, empowerment, or even physical healing. Is there any evidence in Scripture that God will provide such strength?

Before looking into the Word, take a minute to respond to that question.

The purpose of this study is to help us better understand God’s Word on this topic and to properly apply this understanding to present-day situations. The study only scratches the surface on the topic, but hopefully it provides evidence readers need as they cry out for strength yet wonder if He hears and will answer those cries.

The Lord is Strength

The Old Testament includes various writings about God’s strong arm, mighty hand, and great power, especially in relation to His almighty strength displayed in the deliverance of His people. Moses and the children of Israel sang a song to the Lord in celebration of their deliverance from Egypt, recognizing God as their strength. “The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation: He is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation [give Him praise, NIV]; my father’s God, and I will exalt Him” (Exodus 15:2). Recognizing Yahweh as their strength was significant as the people remembered what God had done and found encouragement as they faced their unknown future.

David also wrote of God as his strength (Psalms 18:1-2; 27:1), meaning power, might, and unmovable strong place of refuge. In some passages, the psalmist metaphorically portrayed God as a strong tower, defense, fortress, or rock (Psalm 18:2, 31; 31:2-3). These terms mean that God is the strength for the one needing protection,

care, and power over the enemy. Recognizing God as strength implies that David understood his real need was God Himself.

God as Provider of Strength

David and other psalmists also wrote about the strength God provided for His people (Psalms 8:2; 18:32; 29:11; 68:35; 138:3). Because God *is* strength, He alone can provide the strength His people need when their own abilities are insufficient to face their enemies. Only God, who *is* strength, has the power and ability to overcome any enemy, and only God can strengthen His people to face whatever obstacles, problems, and enemies they encounter.

This is a significant truth for people of today to embrace. God is our strength, our refuge, and a present help in trouble! (Psalm 46:1)

Read all of Psalm 46 and briefly summarize the need for God as our strength, refuge, and help in today's troubling times.

Toward the end of his life, as leadership was being passed to his son, Solomon, David praised the Lord before all the assembly. This prayer of praise is found in 1 Chronicles 29:10-19.

Write verses 11-13 below as your praise to the Lord, for it includes enduring truth about His power and right to give strength to His people.

Strength For What?

Life is full of struggles, seasons of suffering, temptations, and pains that often linger too long and hurt more deeply than a person can bear alone. Sometimes even the strongest Christian lacks

what's needed to get through some of the challenges they must endure. At those times, cries for God to intervene, help, and strengthen are prayed loudly or whispered tearfully. Sometimes people try all they can to endure the challenge, just to find themselves powerless to find victory over the situation.

Evidence of God strengthening His people is clear in Scripture, though the Greek words are sometimes translated into English as other terms such as "stablish," "establish," "edify," "make strong," and "build up." Despite the variations in the terms used, the truth is God, Who is faithful, gave strength to His people for His purposes in biblical times, and He still provides strength for His people today.

The strength God gives often comes during or after periods of struggle, hardship, suffering, and the enemy's attacks. To consider the connection between suffering and strengthening, study the following passages. Notice the context of each Scripture section and the differences in choice of words used in various translations.

Write a summary of each passage, noting when strength comes.
2 Thessalonians 3:1-5 (v. 3 is key)

1 Peter 5:8-11 (v.10 is key)

Strength as a Joint Project

In some Scripture we find correlation between God's supernatural strengthening of his people, what He expects His people to do themselves, and what He instructs His people to do for one another. Already in this study, God as both strength and provider of

strength has been explored. Now, let's look at what the Word says about human responsibility in personal strength building and in strengthening one another.

Paul admonished Timothy to exercise himself unto godliness (1 Timothy 4:7-8). Just as bodily exercise builds physical strength and stamina, spiritual exercise (such as Bible reading, prayer, and worship) strengthens the spiritual part of a person. How can spiritual exercise strengthen a person?

Notice in Luke 22:31-32 what Jesus said to Peter about his failure, repentance, and responsibility to strengthen his brothers. Peter's words were encouraging and strengthening for fellow disciples in biblical times, and for today's disciples as well (See 2 Peter 1:12-15).

For additional study on the topic of strengthening oneself or others, consider 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11. What did Paul mean when he wrote "comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do" (verse 11)?

Perfect strength

Sometimes prayers for strength seem to go unanswered. This can be disheartening, unless a person has the perspective of Paul and the acceptance of the fulness of God's grace. The grace of God is the gift of salvation bought by Christ Jesus for all who would believe and follow Him. This grace of God also enables Christ's followers to live victoriously now, in this life, even in the midst of life's struggles.

The apostle Paul admitted having a "thorn in the flesh" which he boldly and repeatedly asked God to remove. Although we do not know exactly what that "thorn" was, we do know Paul learned a very valuable lesson when God left the thorn but responded with words that have become powerful reminders to people throughout the ages that God's grace is sufficient in all situations. "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 and summarize Paul's words in the space below. Conclude with what you learn from this passage as it relates to prayers for strength that seem to be unanswered.

Platitude or Promise?

How often have you quoted Paul's words from Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"? This is a familiar verse often found inscribed on wall plaques or bookmarks and is possibly more like a platitude than an embraced truth statement. (A platitude is a statement quoted so much that it often loses its true meaning.)

A few minutes of time and thought into Paul's situation at the time he penned those words can help us get back to the depth and breadth of this truth declaration. Paul identified Christ as the source of his strength, so he could accomplish whatever God had for him to do in any situation, including wealth or poverty, as the immediate Scripture context reveals. Paul's trust in the true Provider for all he needed was evident even as he thanked the Philippian believers for their financial assistance. The strength Paul needed and received was not the Philippians' financial assistance, though it was very important for those who gave. Paul clearly expressed his gratitude for the gift, but there is more to this than is typically noticed.

This was Paul's statement, a truth regarding the provision of God so that he (Paul) could do whatever he was meant to do... to endure all situations in a way that would glorify God and fulfill his (Paul's) purpose (see Philippians 3:7-14). Is this a mere piece of Paul's story or is this a truth declaration we can claim for every situation we face?

God's Sufficient Provision

Paul's letter to the Philippians does not end with his testimony regarding the strength he received from the Lord. This passage was directly related to financial need, so it seems. Looking back over the apostle's life, we find God's provision of strength for many trials to always be sufficient to get him through the struggles. Paul knew that the God who provided the strength he needed would also provide what his readers needed (Philippians 4:15-20).

Another well quoted Pauline verse is Philippians 4:19, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." God knows our needs better than we do. We might pray for strength and receive more of *Him*. We might think we need ability to be successful in whatever human strength requires, but God might supply the ability to *endure* rather than conquer. He knows our needs. He loves us. He promises to provide all we need. Sometimes, perhaps even often, this includes strength, but it always means *He* is strength and He will be with us. We do well to always lean on and trust Him, our strength, and our redeemer (Psalm 19:14). ❧

The following resources were valuable helps in research for this study and are recommended for ladies who wish to more extensively explore the topic:

Mounce, William D., editor. *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words*. Zondervan, 2006.

Muck, Terry, general editor. *The NIV Application Commentary* (A series with various authors for books of the Bible). Zondervan Publishing, dates differ with individual volumes.

Strong, James. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Hendrickson Publishers, ND.

Vine, W.E. and others. *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985.

About the Writer: Having served in two ministry-related careers, mission work in Japan and teaching at Randall University, Janice (Jan) Banks, now retired, resides in Denison, Texas. She enjoys spending time with her family and friends, while occasionally helping younger women through mentoring and/or encouragement-focused friendships. She also enjoys being part of Clearview Church and participating in meetings for women or other special ministries beyond her local area.