

GOD'S STRENGTH FOR HIS WEAK PEOPLE
Psalm 27:14

Intro: This morning I read, as I hope many of you did, the account in Matthew's Gospel of what the Lord said to His disciples after they had left the Upper Room and were on the way to Gethsemane. It was this: "All ye shall be offended because of me this night." Peter responded by saying that even if everybody else were offended, he would never be offended. Then the Lord announced Peter's denial. But Peter objected saying, "Though I die with thee, yet will I not deny thee" (Matt. 26:35a). Then all of the other disciples said the same thing. And yet before that chapter was concluded we read, "Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled" (Matt. 26:56b).

God's weak people.

In between the time that the Lord announced Peter's denial, and the Lord's arrest, we have the account of what happened in Gethsemane. The Lord took Peter, James, and John into the inner part of the Garden, and then left them with these instructions: "Tarry ye here, and watch with me" (Matt. 26:38b). What happened? The Lord left them and came back three times. Each time they were asleep.

God's weak people.

The Bible is full of illustrations of the weakness of the Lord's people. Look at Abraham, and you will see weakness. Look at Jacob, and you will see weakness. Look at Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, and you will see weakness. Look at Samson, and you will see weakness. Look at David, and you will see weakness. Look at Solomon, and you will see weakness. Look at Elijah, and you will see weakness. And the amazing thing that seems to be similar in most of these illustrations, and many others we could add to them, is that these weaknesses were to be seen in the lives of people who loved the Lord, and wanted to show how much they loved Him.

The journey of the children of Israel from Egypt to Canaan is forty-year period in which we see the weakness of the Lord's people again and again. All people are weak--physically weak, morally weak. But it is the weakness of the Lord's people that we need to be concerned about because so much is involved when the people of God fail.

Our weakness is no surprise to God. David wrote in Psa. 103,
For he knoweth our frame;
he remembereth that we are dust.
As for man, his days are as grass:

as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.
For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone;
and the place thereof shall know it no more (vv. 14-16).

When the Psalmist was recording in Psalm 78 the journey of the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan, he told how many times God turned away from his wrath, and this was His reason for doing so:

For he remembered that they were but flesh;
a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again (v. 39).

We are weak because we are human. But we as God's people are weak because we fail to appropriate the strength which God has made available to us in Himself.

Who are God's weak people? We all are! God does not have any other kind of people. Leave us to ourselves, and we will most certainly fail. But we can thank God that He does not leave us to ourselves. He may on occasion until we learn to trust Him, but none of us, in spite of our dreadful weakness, fails the Lord as often as we could fail Him. Our whole existence on earth is one long lesson that the Lord is giving us to make us strong--strong, not in ourselves, but strong in the Lord.

We are weak in the presence of temptation. We are weak in our witness. We are weak in our service. We are weak in our fellowship. We are weak in our obedience. Our prayers are weak. Everything we do is marred in one way or another by our weakness.

One of the hymns we have learned since this work began has verses which begin like this:

We have not known thee as we ought...
We have not feared thee as we ought...
We have not loved thee as we ought...
We have not served thee as we ought...

Why do we have to sing a song like that? The door is wide open for us to know the Lord. We can fear the Lord just as much as we want to. We can love the Lord as much as anyone else. The door is wide open for us to serve Him. Why do we fall short on all of these? It is not because the desire is not there; it is because we are weak and have not done "as we ought."

But let me give you some encouragement tonight.

Just as the Bible is full of testimonies to the weakness of God's people, so the Bible is full of the promises of God in which we are assured of His strength. Becoming strong is only possible as we lay hold of God's strength, and make it

our own. Let me remind you of some of the promises.

One that I love very much, and read often, is Isa. 41:10:
Fear thou not; for I am with thee:
be not dismayed; for I am thy God:
I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee;
yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand
of my righteousness.

In the chapter before that we have these words:
But they that wait upon the Lord
shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings as eagles;
they shall run, and not be weary;
and they shall walk, and not faint (Isa.40:31).

When the Lord delivered the children of Israel from Egypt by
opening the Red Sea, Moses had them sing these words:
The Lord is my strength and song,
and he is become my salvation ... (Ex. 15:2a).

Paul told the Ephesian church,
Be strong in the Lord,
and in the power of his might
(Eph. 6:10b).

He told the Philippian church,
I can do all thing through Christ
which strengtheneth me (Phil. 4:13).

And this was his message to them from prison in Rome. We
often wonder how we could endure what the early Christians
went through. The truth is: we couldn't! But it is also
true that they could not have endured such sufferings if the
Lord had not been their strength. God only has weak people.
If we are to be strong so that we will not be continually
failing Him, then we must find our strength in the Lord.

There are many other verses I could mention tonight. If I
have done nothing more in this message that to make you
conscious of these verses in the Bible, our time will have
been well-spent. Look for them as you read your Bible.

But, for the remainder of the time, let us look at Psalm 27,
with special emphasis on the last verse.

This was a Psalm of David. It was a Psalm like many of his
other Psalms, written when he was in trouble. His enemies
were after him, surrounding him, and outnumbering him.
Clearly he was in a losing situation from a human point-of-
view. And yet he had seen a mighty deliverance or he never
would have been able to write the Psalm. See verse 2.

However, we see that David had learned a very important lesson through his troubles. It is stated in verse 1. (Read.) For "strength" we could read, my living stronghold. The Lord was the Living Stronghold of his life.

It is clear that David had been praying, praying fervently, and praying continuously. It seemed that the Lord had departed from him, and that even those who loved him so much were unable to help him. See verse 10.

He would have despaired completely if it were not for the hope that he had in the Lord. Cf. verse 13.

Out of it all he had learned one important lesson. Cf. verses 4, 5.

His purpose in writing seems to have been that he wanted to help the Lord's other weak people so that they would see where to get their strength so that they would be able to glorify the Lord in their lives. We see this in our text.

First of all, let us notice

I. THE EXHORTATION.

There are two of them because the third one is a repetition of the first:

Wait on the Lord: be of good courage...
wait, I say, on the Lord.

David used the same words twice for "wait on." It meant that he had learned, and he wanted all who would read this Psalm to learn, that strength could only be found by turning toward the Lord, moving in the Lord's direction, and then resting there. It means that we must turn from ourselves, turn from other people, and turn from other things which might give us hope, and let our hope be entirely in the Lord, Jehovah, our living, unchanging, promise-keeping God.

David may have been talking to himself here as well as to others. He knew that we all need to wait on the Lord, and to wait for the Lord. He was speaking of what we need to do as special needs arise, but he was saying more than that. He was describing the kind of life that we need to be living: waiting upon God, waiting for Him, seeking Him, trusting Him, praying to Him, making Him our only hope!

Matthew Henry said that it means we must keep close to God and to our duty. We are not to isolate ourselves,

but in the midst of busy lives, let our days be spent in one continual search for the Lord. And then Matthew Henry added, "Whatever you do, grown not remiss in your attendance upon God" (III, 334).

- This ties in also with verses 4, 5.

You see, David was not speaking only of seeking God in emergencies. That is not the way to be truly strong. He was speaking of a way of life.

I would like to know how many of you have the habit of meeting with the Lord every day. I am not talking about what you do with your husband or wife, or with your children. It is good to seek the Lord with them, too. But every single one of us needs to be faithful in seeking God every day of our lives, and looking upon that as the most important thing we have to do on any day. If we are interrupted in it, get back to it as soon as you can. And don't let it deteriorate into a formal reading of your Bible, and then the repetition of the same prayer day after day. David said, and all of the saints who have learned what David learned would say the same thing, "Let your time with the Lord be a time when you are earnestly seeking HIM! Do this day after day, learning of Him, and then seeking to do His will, and you will find that you are being strengthened with strength that you have never had before.

- Paul had to have been thinking of this very thing when he wrote to the Colossians that he was praying that they would be "strengthened with all ..." What a marvelous combination of words we have in that verse: Col. 1:11!

But let me move on quickly to the promise, like all of God's promises, a promise which cannot fail.

II. THE PROMISE.

- Here it is: "And he shall strengthen thine heart." This is where we need strength: in the heart. And it is not we who strengthen ourselves; it is the Lord Who strengthens us. And He will do it continuously, unflinching! This is just as certain a promise as any promise God has ever made to us. He will not fail us. It means strength to be obedient, strength to resist temptation, strength to persevere in our service, strength for every trial. Day by day, moment by moment, there is a supply of grace flowing into the hearts of all of the Lord's people who in their weakness seek His strength. The Lord is "the strength of my life," not

just of certain times when I feel the need to come to Him for help.

Concl: Can your life be described as one in which you are waiting on the Lord? Do you start the day with Him, and then walk with Him throughout the day? Are you conscious of your weakness so that you will not venture out on a day without seeking His blessing and help in your life.

A good illustration of what it means to wait on the Lord is to be seen in the life of Moses. Israel had sinned. Aaron had led the children of Israel in worshipping the golden calf. And the judgment of God had fallen upon them. Moses stood between God and the people as a faithful intercessor and mediator.

But the crowning blow to Moses was when the Lord said,
I will send an angel before thee ...
for I will not go up in the midst of thee;
for thou art a stiffnecked people:
lest I consume thee on the way (Ex. 33:2, 3).

Do you remember Moses' response? He said this,
If thy presence go not with me,
carry us not up hence (Ex. 33:15).

No angel, as wonderful as that might have been, could take the Lord's place. If the Lord would not go with them, Moses wanted to call the whole thing off!

Have you ever told the Lord that about your day, and day after day? That is what pleases Him, and that is where our strength comes from. I can assure you that if you will make it your habit to "keep close to God," as Matthew Henry put it, He will keep close to you. Then your days will take on new joys and new blessings when you show the Lord that you need Him more than you need anyone else.