

Lesson # 7 -- The Promise Regarding the Believer's Strength.

Introduction

- A. We were never designed to operate apart from fellowship with God, and to be divorced from His will and enablement. However, a part of what happened in the Fall -- is the destruction of all of these areas.
- B. Today, when we think of strength, we almost always do so in the context of muscle, endurance, or a capacity for toughness.
- C. The topic of this lesson has to do with spiritual strength. I want to talk about strength as the ability to be the right kind of a person who is able to practice the truth in faith, love, and hope, for the glory of God. When God made us in the Garden of Eden He created us in His image. As a result, we are, by way of our nature and equipment, spiritual people who can learn to live in fellowship with God, and do His will, through faith, love, and hope, by His enablement (strength).

I. The Biblical Theme.

- A. The promise of strength -- a warning to king Asa.

For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly, therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars.  
II Chronicles 16:9

Comment: King Asa was a godly man who failed to trust the Lord in the latter part of his life. He had had many victories of faith, as a young man, and had learned to live in the will of God by divine enablement. He grew careless, however, had made a league with ungodly king Benhadad, and began to live a very self-centered life.

The promise recorded above, spoken to the king by his prophet, was a promise that served as a warning. Asa had made a foolish mistake when he trusted king Benhadad for help when he could have trusted God. It is sad to see how Asa even then did not turn back but continued in his sin.

We must learn to claim this great promise. God seeks to enable us to know and do His will. Only in such a life of fellowship will He be glorified and we will find fulfillment.

B. The promise of strength -- the content of prayer.

That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man. Ephesians 3:16

Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power . . . . Colossians 1:11

Comment: In both of these petitions Paul prayed for all the believers at Ephesus and then Colosse. It is clear that this is the will of God for each of us. We may not overlook this truth and the great privilege that is here presented to us.

It will help us to keep in mind that the divine enablement offered to us is to enable us to know and do the will of God. When we choose to obey God, and put our choices into practice, there is a divine undergirding. That is the promise of God!

C. The promise of strength -- the Biblical exhortation.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the lord, and in the power of his might. Ephesians 6:10

Comment: We have considered the truth that the strength God has for us is the ability to do the will of God. In this passage the apostle Paul is telling how to overcome Satan. It is God's will that the enemy be seen as the evil angel that he is and for all believers to learn how to resist him.

In order to be strong in this important area of the warfare we must be willing to give up all the ways we cooperate with the demonic. Any sin is an open invite to the devil to come and do his work. We receive the divine strength that we need as we are willing to repudiate all those areas in our daily life which open the door to the enemy. The Bible reminds us of the danger of pride, lust, gossip, anger, grudges, criticism, judging, covetousness, pretense, and hypocrisy. As we choose the will of God we are given enablement.

D. The promise of strength -- the Apostles' testimony.

Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily. Colossians 1:29

Comment: The theme of this lesson was clearly understood by Paul and it was the basis for his life and work. Because he wanted to encourage the saints in the city of Colosse he included this page out of his own life in the epistle.

Each of us can easily apply this truth to our daily life. We need only ask as to the will of God in the various areas of the day, and choose to live that way by faith, love, and hope. When we do so we can be sure God's enablement will be with us. (I use the word "easily" but it is really not so. In those places where we are weak or hurt -- it is anything but easy. However, it is a comfort to know that we can succeed -- when we choose to trust God and obey Him.)

E. The promise of strength -- the Apostle's instruction.

And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake, for when I am weak, then am I strong. II Corinthians 12:7-10

Comment: This experience in the life of Paul must have happened at the very beginning of his ministry and not long after his conversion. In some mysterious way he found himself in the presence of God in heaven! To keep him from being proud a physical malady was given him which was in some way under the control of Satan. This meant that Paul had to trust God as never before. Through this trial, which probably continued all his life, he learned the secret which is the theme of this lesson -- he learned to receive the strength to do God's will. While none of us may share Paul's experience, the truth is the same for each of us. As we choose by faith to do the will of God -- divine strength will undergird our own.

II. The Biblical Explanation. (A sample only.)

A. The believer has the ability to admonish other Christians.

And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. Romans 15:14

Comment: The word "admonish" has the hint of warning in it with the thought of redirection. It does not mean to denounce or condemn but to counsel, advise, reprimand, and warn. This ability is a potential in every believer. When we see the need, prepare ourselves by prayer and the Bible, and reach out to another person to admonish -- we are given divine aid. God works with us to enable us to do His will.

B. The believer has the ability to comfort those in trouble.

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. II Corinthians 1:3,4

Comment: This verse is a description of reality to all those of us who have received comfort from others in times of deep trial.

Many have testified to the unusual experience of being comforted by another believer and realizing in those moment the presence and ministry of God Himself. It is His will that we bring His grace and comfort to those about us. When we do so we know God is working in us to give us the equipment we need, and also in the person we are trying to help. This is Christian love and evangelism at its best.

C. The believer has the ability to withstand temptation.

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. I Corinthians 10:13

Comment: This truth is a great encouragement to the sincere Christian. Each of us are faced with a series of temptations each day. The areas in your life and mine where we are enticed are also those where we are weak and therefore vulnerable.

At least one reason for temptation is found in the will of God. He permits us to come under its charm so that we might recognize sin for what it is and through resisting it to become stronger.

Every believer has experienced times when he sought the will of God by faith, in such times of crises, and found the strength to overcome. We have also known failure and weakness because we chose our own will.

D. The believer has the ability to comprehend God's love.

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge . . . .  
Ephesians 3:17-19

Comment: The experience of living in fellowship with God and growing in the understanding and joy of knowing the love of God -- is the will of God for every believer. Much of the insecurity, anxiety, and depression that is often among us will be erased by such a daily walk. It is significant that Paul reminds us that our comprehension of this love will come as we are united to and in fellowship with other believers. We have been joined to other Christians in the new birth, and we are to live in the realization that we are one body. All grudges, divisions, jealousy, and cliques among us will limit our walk with God in the experience of His love.

E. The believer has the ability to resist the Devil.

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil . . . Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. Ephesians 6:11,16

Comment: The truth of this passage is a reminder that we have all the provision we need to resist the enemy. We can wear the armor and hold up the shield of faith (the content of faith -- the defeat of Satan by Jesus Christ).

When we renounce all the ways the enemy can harass us -- sinful attitudes, activity, and relationships -- then we will have the divine wisdom, discernment, and strength to overcome Satan.

III. The Biblical Application. (Summary)

Make you perfect (equipped) in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight . . . .  
Hebrews 13:21

Comment: This verse, the theme of these ten lessons, states the application well. God has given us and will continue to give each of us the equipment we need to do His will. Moreover, He pledges to "work in us" so we can use the equipment.

The issue is clear -- we have the strength to do the will of God. We must always begin with that truth and then ask for discernment if we are not able to succeed. Ask Him to show you how to know and do His will.