

Growing Strong in the Love of God

Our strength is not our own. God grows us that way when we're held fast by his strong arm and rooted in his love.

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**BIBLE
SOCIETY**

Live light

Scripture taken from The Holy Bible: New International Version

Day	Readings	Reference	Reflection/Question
1	The Command to be Strong Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”	Joshua 1:8-9	Strong isn't something that we can be on our own. The Lord's command to Joshua to be strong and have courage is given hand-in-hand with the command to stay close to his Book of the Law. The word of God makes us strong and gives us a kind of courage that we can't imagine on our own. The kind of strong that makes fear run scared. The kind of strong you can be when you know that the Lord your God is with you. How can you keep the words of God on the tip of your tongue? At the front of your mind?
2	For God is my Strength Psalm 28:1-2 I love you, Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. Psalm 27:1 The Lord is my light and my salvation — whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life — of whom shall I be afraid?	Psalm 18:1-2, 27:1	Our strength is not our own. Our strength is the Lord, our God. He is the one who protects us, who rescues us. Because of Christ's strong act of dying for our sins and rising to life again, we do not need to be afraid. Who is there to fear if he has conquered every fear and made it subject to him? The love of the Lord makes fear turn tail and run scampering away. What fears do you have that can be sent packing?
3	For God will come Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, “Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.”	Isaiah 35:3-4	The promise that our God will come, the fact that our God has come, means that we have nothing to be afraid of. Our hands don't need to shake. Our knees can stop their knocking. Our trembling hearts can be stilled and calmed. We can stand with peace and courage and be strong. We are told that God has come, and he will come again. How does living in the safety of these promises challenge your fears?

Growing Strong in the Love of God (continued)

Day	Readings	Reference	Reflection/Question
4	<p>For God has his people ‘in his hands’</p> <p>So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.</p>	Isaiah 41:10	<p>We are not alone. Not only is God with us, he says that he holds his people in his hand. Protected in the palm of God, there is no safer place to be. If God is your God, he is with you, and he promises to help you.</p> <p>How much energy do we waste in fear when we can know the peace of living in the palm of his hand?</p>
5	<p>Let the strong one not boast in his Strength</p> <p>This is what the Lord says: “Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the Lord.</p>	Jeremiah 9:23-24	<p>What are you most proud of? God says that if we want to boast about something, it’s not something that’s ours alone. If we want to shout from the roofs the thing that gives us the most pleasure, then make it the thing that counts the most: that we know God, the God of kindness, justice, righteousness. Kindness, justice, righteousness, these are what God enjoys.</p> <p>What can we be proud of that will please God?</p>
6	<p>The Spirit Strengthens his Church</p> <p>Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.</p>	Acts 9:31	<p>Where do you call home? The early church had found the best home this side of heaven, nestled in that sweet spot living under the fear of the Lord, and held up and encouraged by the Holy Spirit. Held fast, above and beneath. And there was something in the fear and the joy, something about knowing their place before God that gave them a peace and a strength not their own. There’s room for plenty more in this place.</p> <p>What would it look like in your life to know where you stand before God, to know the love of Jesus and to receive the encouragement of the Holy Spirit?</p>

Growing Strong in the Love of God (continued)

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7	<p>God's weakness is stronger than human strength</p> <p>For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength. Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.</p>	<p>I Corinthians 1:25-27</p>	<p>The best we have to show for ourselves is nothing in comparison with God. He leaves human wisdom with nothing to say, he sets the knees of human strength to knock. There's more wisdom and strength in his pinkie finger than in the cumulative tide of strong and wise in all of human history. And he could have just left it like that. Him strong, us weak. But he chose foolish, he chose weak. He uses fools and weaklings in his grand rescue of the whole ruined world. There's no shame in weakness, no dismay in foolishness when they are used by God.</p> <p>Where do you feel weak? Can you see the strength of God because of it?</p>
8	<p>When I am Weak, then I am Strong</p> <p>But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.</p>	<p>2 Corinthians 12:9-10</p>	<p>What gets you down? Paul had plenty that could keep him down, both in body and in spirit. He lists the onslaught of attacks, 'insults, hardships, persecutions (plural!), and difficulties'. But he doesn't lament them. They do not get him down. Rather, he says he delights in them. He knows the Lord, who turns things upside down, and uses weak things to showcase his strength. If we are weak, then God's strength can shine out.</p> <p>Where are you weak? Can you use it as a place to show God's strength in your life?</p>
9	<p>Prayer for Strength</p> <p>I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.</p>	<p>Ephesians 3:16-19</p>	<p>We say that power corrupts, and that absolute power corrupts absolutely. But God says something different. The strength that God gives us from his ample bounty is a new kind of power that changes us from the inside out. With God's love at the heart of it, power can be used to do something miraculous. With love-fuelled strength we can do the seemingly impossible: we can wrap our fingers around the sheer immensity of the love of Christ. It is wider than wide, longer than long, higher than high. It is a love that, when we know it, outshines the limits of what we ever we knew before. It fills us and renews our strength. Paul prays for it, and we can too.</p>

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10	<p>Strong in God to stand</p> <p>Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.</p>	Ephesians 6:10-13	<p>It takes strength to stand strong against outside powers and forces. Over time, even stones melt when met by wind and water. And it takes an unnatural, unearthly power to withstand opposition comes from a dark and evil place. We can't do it alone. We need the special clothes God has made for us, the spiritual armour that strengthens feeble hands, that keeps our knees from knocking. It is his mighty power that enables our feet to stand firm and not give an inch to the evil one.</p>
11	<p>Continue in him, strengthened</p> <p>So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.</p>	Colossians 2:6-8	<p>The strength that God wants us to have is not the strength of cold steel, or the brute massiness of iron. That is the cold, lifeless strength of tinkers and trade. Rather he calls us to a living, growing strength that comes from Christ. Paul says that we are to be like trees and put down roots and grow straight from the death and resurrection of Christ. He is our life, our nourishment, our strength. He keeps us strong in our faith and turns us thankful. With our roots drawing deep into Him, we can be like the tree in Psalm 1, planted by streams of living water, fruitful and evergreen.</p> <p>What would it look like in your life to grow roots into Christ?</p>
12	<p>Stand firm in the Word</p> <p>So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter. May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.</p>	2 Thessalonians 2:15-17	<p>We don't have to be strong on our own. Actually, when you think about it, we can't be strong on our own. Strength from God doesn't work that way. He is the one who gives us what we need to stay strong in our faith. He gives us his word, he gives us his son; he gives us a hope that's true, encouragement that goes on forever, but he also gives us something else to help us: One another. Paul instructs us, brothers and sisters, to hold onto the gifts God has given us. And we need to do it together.</p> <p>What are the good deeds and words that God is strengthening you for?</p>

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Day	Readings	Reference	Reflection/Question
13	<p>He will make the humble strong</p> <p>Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.</p>	I Peter 5:6-10	<p>Peter reminds us not to fool ourselves that we can be strong on our own. We must use the strength God gives us to humble ourselves. To bend our knees to him, bow our heads under the shelter of his mighty hand. And there in that place, give up our fears and anxieties that can cloud our minds and impair our vision. Instead we are to soberly watch and remain firm in our stance against evil. We may suffer, but Peter assures us that our God of care and grace will make us strong again.</p>
14	<p>Fix our eyes on Jesus</p> <p>Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.</p>	Hebrews 12:1-3	<p>The life of faith isn't something we can do by ourselves. In fact, even our very faith isn't our own. It's something that is made and given to us by Christ. We have him who came before us and suffered and died for our faith, and we also have the saints who've come before us, that 'great cloud of witnesses' that surround us. If we keep our minds fixed on the life and death of Christ, we can stay strong and hopeful in our life this side of heaven.</p>