

From Strength to Strength

This month concludes our study of Psalm 84. David wrote this psalm when he was under attack. Verses one through four are about where David received his strength—the Word of God. We could say David was being a hearer of the Word. Verses five through eight are what David did with his strength. We could say David was being a doer of the Word. And verses nine through twelve are a praise unto the Lord for the victory he had from being a hearer and a doer of the word.

We will begin in verse seven, "They go from strength to strength? You see Christians all the time that are defeated. They go from strength to weakness. Why? Because verse seven cannot be taken out of context; it must be put with the previous verses.

He has within him the highways to Zion and then uses those highways to Zion. He's the one who turns the valleys into a fountain.

Strength is developed in persecution. Notice that verse seven is not included in those first four verses that are talking about getting into the Word. Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word, but then faith must be used. What good are weapons if there is no battle? A lot of people want to use their faith, but they want to run from opposition and talk about how great their faith is. God has given us faith to use, and faith is built up in the midst of persecution.

I Peter 1:7 says, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." The word trial there means testing. God says that the testing you go through is precious. We know that God doesn't bring the testing, but God sees it as precious when we go through the testing. Peter is looking back at some of those tests he went through and he said those are some of the most precious times I've ever had, because the enemy was coming at me from every direction, but I saw God deliver me. God says it's more precious than gold!

I Peter 5: 10 states, "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you." The word perfect here means mature. Did you know you cannot mature without problems and testings and trials? I'm not teaching bondage and unbelief, I know there's a real devil out there. If every time problems came along God just picked you up and moved you over there would be nothing precious about that. When you're in the middle of a battle and you're not giving up, God's pride rises up on the inside of you. God is going to deliver you out of that situation. He knows that you are stronger than any battle you can face. It was during those times when David used what he had that he saw the Lord come through with what He had.

Romans 1 :16,17 says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." Righteousness is a revelation. You get the revelation from the Word. Why does the verse say revealed from faith to faith? Why are there two faiths? Because the first faith is the faith that brings salvation, and the next faith is day by day faith in the Word of God. The righteousness and the revelation of righteousness is brought about as you move from glory to glory, from faith to faith, from strength to strength.

How do you get from faith to faith? Successfully using faith in a battle is what brings you from faith to faith. And after you've fought and come through that battle, when God sees you walk through the midst of hell and calamity on this earth, God says I'm proud of you. God comes and pours out more grace. He brings you through and you become strengthened. It's not the tests and trials that make you strong. War does not make the soldier. A soldier has been trained and uses that training in the midst of war, and that's what develops him. A soldier comes out of battle stronger than when he went into the battle.

There are Christians today with no character because they run from opposition.

The rest of Psalm 84:7 is, "every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." Another way to say this is everyone of them appears before God in Zion. You may think you're in the midst of pressure and nobody knows you are there, but I disagree with you. You are appearing before God in Zion. He has His eye on you. I'd much prefer that God see me than people see me. You notice when people have a financial need so often they'll buddy up with someone who has money. Put your trust in God, He'll send all the people you way that are necessary. God sees what you're going through and all wealth comes from him anyway. The New Testament says that God who sees in secret rewards openly. Some of you might need some open rewards right now; remember, God who sees in secret *will reward openly*.

Verse eight says, "O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah." Another way to come out of testing and problems is in this verse. David's standing on the Word, but he also uses the prayer of faith. Notice how forceful he is in this prayer. The prayer of faith is often very forceful. He says, "God give ear, hear my prayer, and turn your attention toward him. Some people think we're blasphemous to pray this way, but the Bible says of the Lord that we are to command the works of His hands, and put Him in remembrance of His words.

Now David goes on to verse nine, and he goes to a different type of prayer-the prayer of praise. It's almost a conversational prayer. "Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed." This is the section of praise. In the first four verses was the hearing of the Word of God. In verses five through eight we had David and his exploits. When you have the Word of God in you and you stand on the Word of God in faith and you pray the prayer of faith in the midst of tests and trials, it will produce rejoicing. This is a progression. There is the time of rejoicing in the midst of the testing and trials by faith, but thank God for the manifestations. When the pay finally comes in you can dance and rejoice before the Lord and really cut loose. When that disease finally does leave your body there can be some special times of rejoicing before the Lord.

It's brought out in verse nine that God is our shield. It simply means that God is our defense. It's not your wise ways that are your defense. It's not your bank account

that is your defense. God is your defense. The next part of the verse says, "Look upon the face of thine anointed." The moment you read over that the first thing you thought was that Jesus was the anointed he was looking upon. Notice that the word anointed is not capitalized. You are the anointed. It's nice for God to look upon the face of Jesus, but it's also nice to know that we are the anointed. David was anointed at this particular time to stand in the offices of the king and of the prophet. We have an anointing too. He has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. We are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people. We are his anointed.

David says, "God, I want you to look at me." In the Word when God looks upon the face of an individual it is because God is satisfied with him. On the cross God had to turn His face away from Jesus because Jesus became sin. When David stood on the Word and came through the battle He knew God had observed him, and was satisfied with how David had handled the battle. Numbers 6:25,26 says, "The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." Isn't it good to know that God can make His face shine upon you?

Sin causes God to turn His face away from us. Leviticus 17:10 says, "And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood." When you're headed in the direction of sin, God's face cannot shine upon you, but when you turn and go back to the ways of the Lord, He can cause His face to shine upon you again.

One more scripture concerning this is Deuteronomy 34:10, "and there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face." Wouldn't that be something to be written on your tomb as an epitaph, that there wasn't anyone like you whom the Lord knew face to face? Wouldn't it be great to say that all of your life God looked upon your face, because every day, every week, every minute, every hour, you walked before Him in satisfaction and God was continually satisfied with you? That's what I want.

We go on in Psalm 84 verse ten, "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand." A day in your presence Lord is better than a thousand days outside of your presence. Is your heart's cry to be in the presence of the Lord? Of all the things that I've done that were fun and exciting, I'd rather have one day in the presence of the Lord than one thousand days sitting on the beaches of wherever it is. He deals with sin in the second part of the verse.

Your priorities can get out of whack. I believe that when your priorities get out of whack God is not satisfied with you, and that His face turns from you.

David goes on to say, "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." David would rather stand out by the gates and open them for people than live in the tents or abide in the tents of wickedness. To abide or dwell means to live in pleasure. You can name all the biggest pleasures in the world that you want, but David would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of God than seek any of them. None of us are doorkeepers or gatekeepers. We've all been ushered into the presence of God. But what David is saying is if God gave him a choice, if he could live in the tents of pleasure or if he could stand as a doorkeeper in the house of God, he'd rather stand there as a doorkeeper in the house of God. Why IS that David's choice? Because even if David stood at the door he could listen in on the inside and get fed, but there's nothing in the tents of wickedness that could ever feed him, or could ever give him real pleasure.

The tents of wickedness is a reference to what went on at the time. Harems were popular. In many different countries kings had harems and every day and every night they partied continually. Can you imagine a twenty-four hour party? Can you imagine as much wine, women, song, and partying you ever imagined going on continually? David says that he'd rather spend one day by the gates than to have a thousand days of pleasures in there. What were David's priorities? The same as ours should be. O God, I yearn, I yearn to be before you. I'm on this job, but God, I'm looking forward to the time when I can be in your presence. I yearn to be there because that's where my strength comes from. And when you go from strength to strength and you conquer the devil, your praise should be, "one day, just one day to be by your gates."

David goes on to say in verse eleven, "For the Lord God is a sun and shield." The sun gives light. A shield blocks that which comes from the enemy. The Lord ministers life and he protects from death.

The verse continues, "the Lord will give grace and glory. No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." What is grace and glory? Grace is the sun which gives light, and glory is what protects his people. What is your life? It is God's grace. What is your protection? It's God's presence. No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. Don't say, "no good thing will he withhold from me," when you're walking in sin, or your priorities are all messed up. You can say I confessed and prayed all the right ways and did all the seven steps to whatever it is, so no good thing will he withhold from me. No. So often we confess verses out of context. You shouldn't quote that verse until you read everything before it, and then say no good thing will he withhold from me, because I walk uprightly.

Walking is a type of your outward life. Spiritually you are not walking; you are seated with him in heavenly places. Walking is a type of outward holiness unto the Lord. We are to walk in love, walk in faith, walk in newness of life, walk in wisdom toward them that are without, walk in truth, and walk in circumspectly before the Lord. Your walk has everything to do with your outward life before the Lord. You should not just maintain a pure heart before Him, but be sure that whatever you do in word or deed, that all is done in the name of the Lord Jesus.

And the final verse of chapter 84 verse twelve reads, "O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man who trusteth in thee." We can see from that verse that there are a lot of blessings to them that walk in Him, trusteth in Him, and put their confidence in Him.

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