

Title: **THE STRENGTH GOD GIVES**

Text: Zechariah 10:12

Subject: *Christ Our Strength*

Date: Sunday Morning — June 17, 2007

Reading: *Psalms 138:1-8 and Isaiah 12:1-6*

Tape # Zechariah #58

Introduction:

We all like to think we are strong: physically strong, mentally strong, emotionally strong, and spiritually strong, strong in faith, strong in grace, and strong in knowledge. I recall meeting a man years ago who wanted to know if I could help him with something. After telling me his name, his first words to me were, “You should know that I’m really strong I the Lord.” I smiled, and said, “Well, I don’t see how I can help you,” and walked away. Since then, I think he has been made strong. It is my prayer that before you leave here today you will be made utterly weak before God. If the Lord will be pleased to make you weak, I have just the message you need. I want to talk to you about **THE STRENGTH GOD GIVES**. Our text will be Zechariah 10:12.

I do not need to remind you that Zechariah 10 is all about the salvation the triune God performs and gives to chosen sinners in Christ. It describes that great work of grace that Christ, Zion’s King, performs, who is “*just and having salvation,*” when he comes to “*speak peace unto the heathen,*” and sends forth prisoners out of the pit by the blood of the covenant. When he hisses for and

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gathers his, whom he has redeemed, he declares, in verse 12, — “*And I will strengthen them in the LORD; and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the LORD.*”

THE PROMISE

What precious words of grace those are! How sure and certain they are! They are the words of God our Savior, whose promises are all “*yea and amen.*” The strength with which God promises to strengthen his elect is Christ himself. Christ is the Strength, as well as the Righteousness of his redeemed.

- If, at any time we are strengthened in Christ, it is by the gracious and merciful hand of our God.
- If I am, at any time, drawn to my God, it is by his own sweet, constraining, irresistible love working in me and upon me (John 6:44).
- If you, at any time, enjoy some fresh, new, delightful revelation of Christ, lifting your soul to heaven with a joy unspeakable, the blessing comes from him. It is the work of his distinguishing mercy and sovereign grace.

GOD’S WORK

It is by the special mercy, grace and love of our almighty, heavenly Father, that Christ is ours. And he who gives us his darling Son, with him gives us all things. Our text describes the blessedness of those

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sinners who are the highly favored objects of the Father's free, everlasting love, the Son's effectual, blood atonement, and the Spirit's almighty, irresistible grace.

- It was our God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit who, from all eternity, contrived, ordered, willed, appointed, and predestined the great salvation proclaimed in the gospel.
- It was the triune God who chose Christ as the Surety and Savior of our souls, by whom the great, stupendous work of redemption must be accomplished.
- It is God the blessed Holy Spirit of grace who bestows the gift and strengthens the chosen, redeemed sinner with salvation.

Blessed, holy, compassionate, gracious Lord God, fulfil this promise today in the hearts of chosen sinners, for Christ's sake! Fulfil it daily in our souls. Bear us up, carry us through, and strengthen us in the Lord our God, that we may indeed walk up and down in the name of your darling Son, until we see him as he is in our eternal home bring me in to see his face in thine eternal home, being perfectly conformed to his image forever in heave's everlasting glory!

(Zechariah 10:12) "And I will strengthen them in the LORD; and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the LORD."

WEAKNESS IMPLIED

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The first thing that strikes me in this text is the fact that there is an implied weakness in those to whom the promise is given. There is nothing promised in our text to you who are strong. Why should strength be given to one who is not weak? Only the weak shall be made strong.

That which needs strength is weakness. And weakness is what we are. “*Without me,*” our Savior says, “*ye can do nothing*” (John 15:6). And we know that it is so. Without him...

- I cannot know God.
- I cannot please God.
- I cannot approach God.
- I cannot walk with God.
- I cannot benefit you.

I am, and always have been, a fairly strong man physically and emotionally. But spiritually, I know that I am a man utterly weak, weak in my soul, weak before God (Psalm 102:4, 11; Daniel 10:8).

(Psalms 102:1-4) “Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee. (2) Hide not thy face from me in the day *when* I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day *when* I call answer me speedily. (3) For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth. (4) My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread...(10) Because of thine

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indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down. *(11) My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass.*”

Like Daniel, I have seen Christ, and the more clearly I see him the more fully I am compelled to confess, there remains “*no strength in me: for my comeliness is turned in me into corruption, and I retain no strength*” (Daniel 10:8). Do you find that to be the case with you?

We are **weak-headed**. The head is the seat of knowledge, apprehension, understanding, and remembrance. — “*The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment*” (Isaiah 1:5-6).

Agur said, “*I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy*” (Proverbs 30:3). How dull, how forgetful we are! It is only as he gives us the continual anointing of his Spirit and continually abides with us that we have understanding, and “know him that is, true” (1 John 2:27; 5:20). Every time we open the Bible to read, every time we go to hear the gospel preached, we ought to ask the Lord Jesus, be strength to our understanding, open to us the Scriptures, and enable us to remember his Word.

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We are **weak-hearted**. — “*How weak is thine heart, saith the Lord GOD*” (Ezekiel 16:30). The heart is the seat of our affections. Oh how weak is this heart of mine! How strong and stiff it is to that which is evil! How weak are its affections to Christ!

(Jeremiah 17:9) “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”

We are **weak-handed**. The hand is that by which we receive things. Any gift that is offered is received by the hand. The hand is used in Scripture to represent faith. How weak I am in believing God, weaker than water! I ought to believe my God; but I cannot and will not except as he works faith in me and gives strength to my feeble hand to believe him. I say it to my shame, but I am a weak-handed man.

The hand is that with which we hold what we have received. We have taken hold on Christ. It is a saving hold. But it is not our hold of him that is our security. Our security is his hold on us! I am all inability and weakness. All ability is his! I am weakness. Christ is Strength.

Truly, as Paul puts it, “*We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us*” (2 Corinthians 4:7). Do not surprised, if you feel like an earthen vessel, a broken, empty, clay

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pot. Do not be surprised, if you are made deeply and daily sensible of your weakness, of being such a frail vessel into which God has communicated the treasure of his grace. We are just earthen vessels, clay pots, tottering and broken. In our flesh dwells no good thing. Our souls cleave to the dust. We are often startled by our inward corruptions, the depth of our soul's depravity; and the vile abominations that work in our deceitful, desperately wicked hearts. We are often overwhelmed by the fact that we are so little moved by the mercy, love and grace of God so bountifully bestowed upon us in Christ.

But I want you to know something. I want you to see this and see it clearly. — **It is the will of God that this heavenly treasure that makes you rich for eternity is lodged in an earthen vessel.** He puts the great treasure of his grace and salvation in such earthly vessels as we are “*.that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us!*” It is God himself who has arranged it. He has done so, he has arranged for us to carry his treasure in these dirty clay pots, that we may ever be clothed with humility before him and glory only in Christ.

STRENGTH PROMISED

To poor, weak, bumbling sinners like us, the Lord God promises strength. He says, “*I will strengthen them in the LORD.*” Jehovah the Father promises to strengthen his redeemed in Jehovah the Son; and he conveys that strength to us by Jehovah the Spirit. In other words, just

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as Christ is made of God unto us Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption, he is made of God unto us Strength (Exodus 15:2; 2 Samuel 22:33; Psalm 28:7; 118:14).

(Exodus 15:2) “The LORD *is* my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he *is* my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt him.”

(2 Samuel 22:33) “God *is* my strength *and* power: And he maketh my way perfect.”

(Psalms 28:7) “The LORD *is* my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.”

(Psalms 118:14) “The LORD *is* my strength and song, and is become my salvation.”

Christ is the Strength of our hearts and of our hands, and he gives understanding to our heads; but how did the Lord Jesus become our Strength? **He was made our Strength by being made weakness for us.** Weakness is the result of sin. In fact, our spiritual weakness and sin cannot be separated. Adam had no weakness in the Garden. It was not until he knew sin that he knew weakness. And when our Lord Jesus Christ was made sin

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for us, he was made weakness, that he might be our Strength (Psalm 22:15).

(Psalms 22:15) “My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.”

When the Lord God visits his redeemed in the saving operations of his grace, by the power of his Spirit, he makes Christ our Strength (Isaiah 12:2).

(Isaiah 12) “And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. (2) Behold, God *is* my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH *is* my strength and *my* song; he also is become my salvation. (3) Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. (4) And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. (5) Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this *is* known in all the earth. (6) Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great *is* the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.”

When my strength and hope perished from the Lord, he made Christ my Strength. Out of weakness we are made strong by Christ (Hebrews 11:34). And when Christ is

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made our Strength, the Lord commands, “*Let the weak say I am strong*” (Joel 3:10). He commands us to believe it in our hearts and confess it with our lips. Though we find no strength in ourselves, he commands us, the weakest of the weak, to say, “*I am strong.*” — “*Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength*” (Isaiah 40:29). — **This is what it is to** “*be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; 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, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God*” (Ephesians 3:16-19).

Then, when Christ becomes our Strength, knowing that his grace is sufficient, glorying in our infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon us, we can and should say, “*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*” (Philippians 4:13), for when we are weak, then are we strong. Jacob “*took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God*” (Hosea 12:3).

When Christ is made our Strength, he strengthens us day by day (Deuteronomy 33:25).

(Deuteronomy 33:25) “Thy shoes *shall be* iron and

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brass; and as thy days, *so shall thy strength be.*”

(Isaiah 33:2) “O LORD, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble.”

The Lord Jesus Christ is our Strength, and he gives us **daily strength**, the strength we need every day. His is strength that is ready for us every day. What a blessing it would be, as we awaken every morning, to remember that Christ is our Strength.

- With each day there are temptations are to be resisted. — How can we resist them, but in the strength of Christ?
- With each day there are new afflictions are to be borne. Sufficient for each day is the evil of it. We are born to trouble, and born again to trouble. — How can we bear them, but in the strength of Christ?
- With each day there are new duties are to be performed — towards God — towards our neighbors — towards our families — towards ourselves. — How can we perform them, but in the strength of Christ? — Christ is our Arm and our Strength in everything.

SHALL WALK

Now, look at the next line in our text. — When Christ is our Strength, the God of all grace promises, “*They shall walk up and down in his name, saith the LORD.*” Walking

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in his name, that is, walking in faith, he graciously causes his own to...

- Walk in peace, though often in trouble.
- Walk in liberty, though frequently assaulted.
- Walk in good company (“I am with you.”), though constantly surrounded by wickedness.
- Walk up to God, though ever walking down in humiliation.
- Walk in light, though ever in darkness.
- Walk in hope, though living among hopeless men.
- Walk up to glory, as we walk down to the grave.

THE METHOD

How does the Lord accomplish this work? How does he strengthen us? He strengthens us by constantly making us aware of our weakness, that we might find all our strength in him. — **Two Examples**

- Peter (Luke 22:31-32)

(Luke 22:31-32) “And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired *to have* you, that he may sift *you* as wheat: (32) But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”

- Paul (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)

(2 Corinthians 12:7-10) “And lest I should be

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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. (8) For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. (9) 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. (10) 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."

The more I know my weakness, the more, like the scared little rabbit described in Proverbs 30:26, **I RUN TO THE ROCK**, my hiding place, who is my Strength.

(Proverbs 30:26) "The conies *are but* a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks;"

Christ is my Rock, the Rock of my salvation. Like a weak, scared rabbit, I make my house in him. This is my prayer, Lord God, make me weak before you, and keep me weak.

- Consciously Weak.
- Growingly Weak.
- Painfully Weak.
- Contritely Weak.

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I pray that God will graciously do the same thing for you. This is God's promise to weak, needy, helpless sinners (Isaiah 66:1-2).

(Isaiah 66:1-2) “Thus saith the LORD, The heaven *is* my throne, and the earth *is* my footstool: where *is* the house that ye build unto me? and where *is* the place of my rest? (2) For all those *things* hath mine hand made, and all those *things* have been, saith the LORD: but to this *man* will I look, *even* to *him that is* poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.”

(Zechariah 10:12) “And I will strengthen them in the LORD; and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the LORD.”

AMEN.

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