



Sunday September 30th, 2018
Strengthening Ourselves in the Lord

How do we respond in that moment when we feel we tried God and sensed His move, but now we are right back deep in the problem trying to battle it with little or no strength? Have you wondered what more you should do to strengthen yourselves?

The word Strengthen means to prevail, to be immovable, unshakable, it means to be courageous, to be firm. It means to be resolute to withstand. It means to stand your ground in the face of circumstances.

In 2 Chronicles chapter 20 we read that the Moabites, Ammonites and a few Meunites came to wage war against Jehoshaphat.

The verse begins with the words “It happened after this”

After what? Jehoshaphat, had instituted a number of reforms to bring the nation back to the Lord.

It would have been easy for Jehoshaphat to have said, “God? I tried to bring the nation back to You. I taught them to put away their idols and follow You because You alone are God. And now we’re facing these three large armies who can wipe us out! I don’t deserve this kind of treatment for all the good things I’ve done for you!”

Another natural reaction would have been for Jehoshaphat to trust in his army. Earlier I mentioned to you that he had strengthened himself by having many men of war, mighty men of valor. He was equipped for war. It would have been easy for him to think, “We’re prepared to face these 3 great armies! Let’s fight them!”

What was Jehoshaphat’s response?

Strengthen ourselves in the Lord by continually living in His Presence

2 Chronicles 20:3: “And Jehoshaphat feared, and set [c]himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.”

Jehoshaphat was frightened at the situation that had risen, but at the time of great trial, He sought the presence of God. This was nothing new for Jehoshaphat ... he always sought God, and walked in His commandments.

Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. The people of Judah and Jerusalem gathered together to ask *help* from the LORD. Not only seek help from the Lord but they came to seek the LORD.



The Hebrew word “seek” means, literally, “to trample under foot,” to beat a path to God because you frequent that way so often.

For Jehoshaphat, ‘Seeking the Lord’ was not an automated, ritualistic response that one would do when they face trials which is Pray and ask God And then go looking for ways and people to fix it.

Jehoshaphat knew that time was precious, but instead of planning strategies for war, He went to the temple and sought the presence of God. He and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem, including the animals fasted and prayed. By fasting and praying, they showed immense trust in God who would provide them the strength to fight the battle. Jehoshaphat did not depend on His physical strength, but he depended on the strength of the Lord.

Now we must ask ourselves are we looking to God to strengthen us when we come to Sunday church service or to our Life Groups ? Do we look to men and woman who will pray for us so we can be strengthened? These are all natural ways one responds to when we face trials. OR are we are we so used to living in the presence of God that we constantly and continually derive our strength, hope and encouragement from Him to fight our battles.

When we continually live in His presence, we will find ourselves praying even when we don’t feel like, worship even when the situation does not require us to do so, trust in God even when what we see looks hopeless. It’s in His presence that we continually live in that we find strength to fight our battles, persevere, experience joy and peace in the midst of the storm and not just barely managing to get past battered and feeling the weightiness.

Living in His presences is to leave everything aside on an everyday basis and just seek God.

When you dwell in the presence, the Lord extends all of Himself to us. All of God’s immeasurable power and strength is available to us but to the extent we extend ourselves is the extent He extends all of Himself to us.

When Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah and Jerusalem sought the Lord, He encouraged them and gave them the answer to their problem - **2 Chronicles 20:15-17**

The next day, early in the morning Jehoshaphat led His army for war. This King so enjoyed and lived in the Presence of God that instead of having His strongest men, men of valour in the front line, he appointed the singers and worshippers to lead the army. They went out before the army and were singing:

“Praise the LORD,
For His mercy *endures* forever.”

They were praising God even before they saw or received their victory.



The Bible says in vs 22, that Now when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushes

It's when God sees their attitude, the trust and faith they had in Him, that they are praising Him for the victory even before they received it. Jehoshaphat was going forth for battle putting God ahead of the army and praising Him the Lord works on their behalf.

It's when you dwell in His presence that your focus shifts from the magnitude of the problem to the greatness of your God. The focus shifts from being overwhelmed by the problem to being overwhelmed by the greatness and power of God. So much so that instead of complaining and being vexed by your problem you are praising Him and thanking Him.

It's here in the Presence of God that the battle is already won in the spiritual realm you will soon see the answer in the physical.

The secret of strengthening ourselves in the Lord when we face trials and problems is to constantly live in the Lord's Presences. Rejoicing, prayer and thanksgiving are tools for strengthening ourselves in the Lord, and are meant to be ongoing in our lives, and not merely for crises and difficulties.

Another way of strengthening ourselves in the Lord is to know the Lord we seek.

Then Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, and prays aloud.

He does not begin by pouring out His problem to God but he begins by reciting *God's Relationship with them:* "O LORD God of our fathers,"

2 Chronicles 20:6 "and said: "O LORD God of our fathers, *are* You not God in heaven, and do You *not* rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand *is there not* power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You?"

Jehoshaphat reminds himself that the God of Israel is with them and will help them just as He did for their fathers.

Next he recites *God's Attributes* -*Are* You not God in heaven, and do You *not* rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand *is there not* power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You?

Why is he telling God all this? Certainly not for God's information! It was to rehearse in his own mind and in the people's minds the greatness of God, so they could trust in Him.

Next he recites *God's actions*



2 Chronicles 20:7: “*Are You not our God, who drove out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel, and gave it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever? 8 And they dwell in it, and have built You a sanctuary in it for Your name...*

He Reminds God of the covenant He made with His people - Israel - saying, 9 ‘If disaster comes upon us—sword, judgment, pestilence, or famine—we will stand before this temple and in Your presence (for Your name *is* in this temple), and cry out to You in our affliction, and You will hear and save.’”

He reminds God of His covenant he made (in 2 Chronicles 6:28-30) at the dedication of Solomon’s temple to hear the prayers of His people when they cry to Him in their distress.

Finally Jehoshaphat mentions the problem which, he reminds God, stems from the fact that Israel had obeyed Him by not wiping out these very people who are now invading the land (20:10-11)! They are about to drive Israel out, not of *their* possession, but of *God’s* possession. Finally, he calls attention to God’s ability to deal with the problem, in contrast to Israel’s inability (20:12).

Jehoshaphat’s prayer focuses on God as He has revealed Himself in His Word! If we fill our prayers with the greatness of our problems, our faith will shrink. But if we fill our prayers with the greatness of our God and how He has worked down through history, our faith will grow. God delights to answer believing prayers where we put our finger on the promises and truth in His Word and ask Him to make it so in our case. In the midst of our trials and problems, God wants us to focus on who He is - His greatness, His power and what He can do.

David faced the giant Goliath with such confidence and determination because his strength was not himself, but He knew that the same God who enabled him and strengthened him and gave him the victory to kill the bear and the lion is the same God who will enable him and give him the victory against Goliath. It was this confidence that God helped David kill Goliath and give him the victory.

David knew he had a Great, Big, wonderful God and it was not just a fact, but a reality in his life.

For David having a Great, Big, Wonderful God was not just a fact ...but was something he experienced.

David became king only after 10 or 13 years after Samuel anointed him as king.

In those interim years, David experienced difficulty, persecution, and rejection more than any one of us would ever face.

David had to constantly run away from Saul, because Saul was determined to kill him. He left Jerusalem and hid in several places. David liberates the city of Keilah from the Philistines. When David learned that Saul knew he was in Keilah, David enquires of the Lord whether Saul would come after him and whether the people of Keilah whom he had just saved would protect him or



turn him over to Saul. God told David that Saul was coming for him and the people of Keilah will hand him over to Saul. David was rejected by his own people whom he saved against the Philistines. I'm sure David would have been very dejected and deeply saddened.

So David flees to the wilderness with a few men who were rejects of society. These rejects were trained by David to be mighty men of war.

To prevent himself from being killed by Saul, David and his 600 men move to Goliath's home town of Gath under the protection of the Philistine King of Gath. After this, Saul quits hunting David. The King of Gath gives David and his 600 men the city of Ziklag to live in.

Soon David wins the confidence of the King of Gath who makes David his personal bodyguard.

The Philistines gather for war against Saul. David joins the King of Gath and the 4 other Philistine lords to battle Saul. The 4 other Philistine lords mistrust David thinking that he will join hands with Saul in the battle so he can get into good terms with Saul. So the King of Gath was forced to send David back to Ziklag while the Philistines go to fight Saul.

David again feels rejected.

When David and his men return to Ziklag, they see that the Amalekites had burned the city and kidnapped all the women, children and their flocks.

When David and his men saw the city burning and all their wives and children taken as captives and lost everything they had they lifted up their voices and wept, until they had no more power to weep.

How did David's men respond to the situation?

1 Samuel 30 vs 3 says, Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters.

In this miserable situation, David's men who were rejects of society ... whom David trained and made them mighty men of valor; when they saw that they lost their wives, children and all their belonging were gone they planned to stone David.

How did David respond?

The latter part of vs 6 says, but David strengthened himself in the LORD his God. "David strengthened himself in the Lord." The Bible does not say David prayed, "O Lord strengthen me please," but does say, "David strengthened himself in the Lord."

David faced one rejection after the other. He must have become weary, tired, distressed, deeply disappointed but here is David at the most difficult and painful time of his life that he turns to His God for strength.



David spent days in the wilderness alone looking after his father's sheep. During those times, he spent talking to God. He spent long hours in the presence of God. So it was very natural for him to turn to His God for strength.

David knew the source of his strength was outside of himself and was in God—and so he ran to Him. He knew that while he was at his weakest, and was unable to fight in his own strength, he could “be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might”

He sought God in His presence first, and then strengthened himself there. And it was while he was in God's presence that David received the word to pursue and win the victory, which he did. When David turns to God for strength, God strengthens David. David seeks God; God tells him to pursue the Amalekites for he will surely recover everything.

Not too long after this that David becomes King.

The Bible is filled with numerous promises in which God promises to strengthen us or give us strength. God is our refuge and strength. Then why does God want us to strengthen ourselves in Him.

First, so God can be glorified.

If we turn to the world for help, the world gets the glory. If we turn to God as our only refuge and strength, He gets the glory.

2 Chronicles 20:27-29 “Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, with Jehoshaphat in front of them, to go back to Jerusalem with joy, for the Lord had made them rejoice over their enemies. 28 So they came to Jerusalem, with stringed instruments and harps and trumpets, to the house of the Lord. 29 And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries when they heard that the Lord had fought against the enemies of Israel.”

Through this victory the God of Israel not only received the glory and praise from His people, but when the countries heard about how the Lord had fought for Israel, they were filled with fear-reverence and awe for Him.

It wasn't David's desire to be King but God chose him to be King. Then why did he have to go through these 10 -13 years of pain, suffering, distress and constantly hiding to save his very life?

God did not want another King Saul. Saul's heart had not been groomed through testing before he became King. As King, Saul had a measure of anointing to shepherd and lead the people in war against their enemies. Saul's victories exposed the hidden weakness of his heart towards God. That weakness combined with his growing appetite for the favour of man led him to bring glory to himself and dishonor and disobey the Lord. Saul's heart that was more inclined to make him more successful ultimately destroyed him.



Even though David had a heart after God, the years of hardship and testing groomed him to handle the glory and responsibility. If not like Saul, David would have wasted the anointing he received.

Secondly, James 1:4 says: Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters,[a] whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Trials and problems make us mature believers who think and act like Jesus. When our focus and eyes are on Jesus, we become like the one we are looking at. His life starts to flow into our lives and transforms us into His likeness.

Thirdly, we'll be those mature believers who will not use the favour God gives for our purposes but for His.



LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Sunday September 30th, 2018
Strengthening Ourselves in the Lord

This is a simple guide for use in Life Group discussions. Our objective is to focus on the application of the Sunday sermon - how each one is becoming a doer of the Word and building their life on God's Holy Word. The Life Group meeting would normally last for 2 hours. Each Life Group would have up to 12-15 people.

Preparation

To prepare for the Life Group meeting, you can listen to the Sermon Key Points (sermon summary in five minutes) or the full length Sunday sermon. You can also review the Sunday Sermon notes. All these are available in the "All Peoples Church Bangalore" mobile App or online at apcwo.org/sermons. Pray for the Life Group meeting and invite the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Welcome

The Life Group meeting may commence with a time of prayer, worship and a fun activity.

LISTEN to God's Word

Read the following Scripture passages: *2 Chronicles 20:1-30*

INVESTIGATE God's Word Together

Please discuss a few of these together, giving time for people to share their insights. We encourage each one individually to make notes of their personal learning during the Group discussion.

1) How do we strengthen ourselves in the Presence of the Lord?

2) What are the benefits of living in His Presences?

3) What are bold, believing prayers?

4) God's Word is filled with His promises that He will strengthen us or He is our strength then why should we strengthen ourselves in the Lord?

If time permits, each one takes a few (3 minutes max) to share one or two key learning and how they see themselves applying it into their specific life situations. Encourage each one to participate and share.

FELLOWSHIP by sharing your life and spiritual journey



Each one takes a few (3 minutes max) to share anything from their walk with God, something God has been teaching them, a testimony of answered prayer or a specific challenge that they would like prayer for. Encourage each one to participate and share.

ENCOURAGE each other by praying and ministering to one another

Get into small groups of two or three and take turns to thank God and pray for each other in the light of what was learnt today. Listen to the Holy Spirit. Expect the gifts of the Holy Spirit to flow bringing healing, releasing miracles, prophecy, etc.

Regroup and pray together for:

- 1, families to be protected and strengthened*
- 2, a mighty outpouring of God's Holy Spirit on us as a church and through us to bless many others in our city and nation. Nothing but a mighty work of God's Spirit can change our city and nation.*
- 3, for the BUILD TO IMPACT project - for God's hand to guide us through the land search and acquisition process, and for finances to be more than enough to get this project done.*

Close by thanking God together.