

# God Gives Strength

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Preacher: Jason Webb

[ 0 : 00 ] In 1776 and 1777 in England, there was a man named John Stocker who wrote nine hymns, and he sent them into a magazine called the Gospel Magazine in England.

We don't know anything about him except the town that he was born in, and that he contributed these nine hymns to this magazine.

And one of his hymns is one that a group has modernized. And the second verse of one of these hymns goes like this.

Without thy sweet mercy, I could not live here. Sin would reduce me to utter despair, but through thy free goodness my spirits revive.

He that first made me still keeps me alive. I love that. Don't you feel that way sometimes of without his goodness, I could not live here.

[ 1 : 05 ] I would just be reduced to utter despair. The world's too much. Everything facing me is too much, too much for me. Without the promises of God, I don't know, honestly, where I would be.

And probably you would say the same. I don't know where I would be without God's promises. Sin and everything else. My weakness. My enemies.

Myself. It would reduce me to utter despair. God's promises. They're light in the dark for us. They're a kiss from heaven.

They're solid rock under our feet. Without God's promises. I just want you to imagine. What would your life be like?

Just let me die. And so the promises of God, I don't have just an academic or a professional interest in them. You don't have just sort of an academic interest in them.

[ 2 : 09 ] They're the only thing that keep me from utter despair. Now, all of God's children think the same thing when we're in our right minds, when we're thinking the way that we're supposed to be thinking.

Charles Spurgeon said God's promises are minds of wealth. Armories of weapons. Hospitals full of medicine. Barns full of food.

The Magna Carta declaring our freedom. The Tower of London filled with jewels. And all of them are sweet mercies to us.

We need these promises. And they're all purchased on the cross. And now they come to us by faith. We saw that last week, our last time.

That all of God's promises are yes and amen. They come to us because if God would not spare his own son, how will he not give us all things that we need? And all those things are these promises.

[ 3 : 11 ] And so this afternoon, let's look at another promise of God. Would you turn to Isaiah chapter 40? Isaiah chapter 40. And my prayer, my hope is that this promise encourages you.

Isaiah chapter 40. We're going to begin reading in the middle of verse 28. The Lord is the everlasting God.

The creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary. And his understanding no one can fathom.

He gives strength to the weary. And increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary. And young men stumble and fall. But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not be faint. Well, verse 29 is the promise that I want to look at this afternoon.

[ 4 : 25 ] It says, he. That is the everlasting God. The creator of the ends of the earth. Who never gets tired. That's who this is about. This is what he promises to do.

He gives strength to the weary. And increases the power of the weak. Now, here. Here's a promise for me. Here's a promise for you.

A precious, precious promise. Weary? Oh, yes. Weak? Yes. That's me. And the Lord says, I will give you strength.

I will give you strength. The ESV says, he gives power to the faint. And to him who has no might, he increases strength. I'm so weary.

This is where we enter into the promise. This is where we connect with it. This is where it becomes precious to us. Are we weary? Are we weak? Faint?

[ 5 : 23 ] No might? And you say, yes, that's me. Well, here's a promise for you. Here's a promise for you. Sometimes we feel like Elijah, don't we?

After the showdown at Mount Carmel with the prophets of Baal and Ahab and Jezebel. You remember what happened? He ran. He flies into the desert.

And he comes to a broom tree. And he sits down underneath it. And he prays a very unusual prayer. He prays that he might die.

Again, without thy sweet mercy, I could not live here. That's how Elijah was feeling. I just cannot live like this. Just let me die. He says, I've had enough, Lord.

Take my life. I am no better than my ancestors. Where were Elijah's ancestors when Elijah was praying this? They were dried up in the ground somewhere, in a cave somewhere.

[ 6 : 26 ] Completely spent. No life in them. Skeletons in a cave. He says, that's how I am. No better than my ancestors. I'm spent.

I'm as good as dead. I'm worn out. Heart sick. Weary. Weak and faint. He was tired.

Weary. Weak. Weak. Weak. Sometimes when I get tired, someone will say, I hope you're tired in the work and not of the work.

and sometimes I just want to say I'm tired in the work, I'm tired of the work I'm tired by the work, I'm tired through the work I'm tired for any preposition you want to put in there I'm tired well here's a promise for you here's a promise for me when we feel that way I'll give you strength maybe you're a mom and the cares are just relentless they're relentless maybe your marriage is hard and it's just the same things again and again maybe it's your work, maybe it's your ministry even here and you're tired and you look at the load in front of you the list in front of you and you cry out this is just too much I can't handle this, I can't do this, I don't have what it takes maybe you've been facing a long trial a long medical trial and you say I'm like that woman who was sick for 12 years and doctors couldn't help me and there's no remedy on the horizon and you say I don't know how I can go on I'm scraping the bottom of the barrel here I'm down to that last quart of flour down to that last pint of oil let's just collect some wood eat our last meal because I'm done maybe this weakness this weariness has been something that's gradually come upon you sometimes that happens just the accumulation of things you're carrying a load for a long time and after a while you realize wow I am tired I am tired the hobbit the hobbit Bilbo said to Gandalf I don't look it but I'm getting old and I'm feeling stretched thin like too little butter scraped over too much bread maybe you feel that way just not enough of you to go around and the part of you that is doing things you just feel stretched thin well here's a promise for you here's a promise for the weak and the weary and the spent and the fearful he gives strength to the weary and he increases the power of the weak now look at the verse the verse before verse 28 verse 28 has already said

[ 9 : 42 ] God is not like us this is why we can have confidence in this promise this is not a promise given to someone who doesn't have strength this is not me promising you I will help you and give you strength he's not like us he doesn't grow look at it he doesn't grow tired or weary because he doesn't grow tired or weary because he's the everlasting God the eternal God he has life within himself he never gets to the point where he feels like too little butter over too much bread he has strength within himself he has all the power he never runs out and so for him to give you strength for him to give you power it costs him nothing of his own it doesn't diminish his strength in the least it says he's the creator and sustainer of the ends of the earth so he's holding up this whole earth the very ends and the very edges so lift your eyes and look to the heavens who created all these who brings out the starry host one by one and calls them each by name because of his great power and mighty strength not one of them is missing not one of them disappears not one of them just burns out and is no more he holds the stars up he holds the stars up night after night and so he is strong and the strong one the God of creation says I will give you strength when the load is too much

I will give you strength so you're faced with a ministry opportunity here at church and you say I don't know if I can do this I don't know if I have enough to give I don't know maybe you've already agreed to it now the moment of that time comes and you're called to do something and you're fearful and

you're I don't know if I have what it takes to accomplish it let me just say trust me I've faced that a thousand times sometimes not sometimes every sermon feels impossible it really is because the things that I want to see happen the spiritual good that I want to do I can't do Jesus is right without me you can do nothing and so I would say yes Lord I feel that so when you're there what do you do the very natural tendency is to just to rely on your own strength and relying on your own strength looks like backing up retreating saying no

Peter tells us in his first epistle Peter gives us the answer for us when when we're in that moment when you're asked to do something or when you're confronted with something and you say I just don't have the strength to do that Peter first Peter 4 if anyone speaks he should do it as one speaking the very words of God and if anyone serves he should do it with the strength God provides so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ to him be the glory and the power forever and ever amen when do we say to him be the glory and the power forever and ever amen we say it when we have come completely weak and we we then rely on his strength we take from his strength and then we do it and then we give him all the glory and all the praise so how do we minister when we are weak how do Sunday school teachers and moms and dads and deacons how do we serve when we are weak we serve in the strength that he provides he so he gives us strength he gives us strength and then we say to him be the glory and the power forever and ever amen we only praise when we've previously trusted in him and relied upon him and he came through for us and then we we say he is powerful he gave me that strength

Paul in Colossians said I strive with all his energy that he powerfully works in me so yes I serve yes I do it I make that hard phone call I have that hard conversation I stand up I say something I do something yes I serve but where does the power come from it's from him and I look to him it's his power and he has no lack and he's promised it and so we hold him to it that's what faith does faith holds God to his word it's not blackmail it's faith saying Lord you said it now do it we pray Isaiah 33 2 oh Lord be gracious to us we wait for you be our strength every morning our salvation in the time of trouble our strength every morning that seems to be an indication of everyday needs so we get up in the morning

I'm sure you have done this and do this you wake up in the morning and you you face the same things you're going to work you're going to work again and and it's really from the outsider's perspective it's no different than any other morning it's the same people it's the same job it's the same situation but some mornings we feel our weakness more than others and we say I've done this a thousand times but I don't think I can do it again today and so we pray Lord you've promised you have promised that you would give strength to the weary and increase the power of the weak and so be my be my strength this morning and then we swing our legs out over that bed and we get up and we go we trust him give me strength and then we get up and go now there are times when we need strength to just keep going being hardy being doing the next thing endurance perseverance and there is strength for that look down at verse 31 the very end they will run and not grow weary they will walk and not be faint now verse 31 has two different kinds of situations where we need strength and the walking and the running those are just ordinary activities those are about moving forward those are about doing the things that we've done again and again and so often that's the Christian life it's just keeping on it's just keeping on it's not spectacular it's not immense movement forward it is just a step after a step after a step and to just walk is what the Christian life is

[17:05] I think it was Eugene Peterson wrote a book about the songs of ascent from Psalm 120 to 134 those are the pilgrim psalms that they sang as they went to Jerusalem and it's a picture of our life as we go to heaven and Eugene Peterson called his book on the songs of ascent a long obedience in the same direction I really like that a long obedience in the same direction you know the Christian life is usually not spectacular or particularly excruciating challenging moments it's about keeping on it's about that long obedience in the same direction he promises strength to keep us moving in that same direction so moms those challenges with the children their strength for that day dads whatever the situation ordinary things but there are but there are times of special challenge is God only good for the ordinary days we need them for those ordinary days but is that all he's is that only time he comes through well there's there's there's promise strength for those moments when when the moment is just too big they will soar on wings like eagles that's not ordinary movement that's extraordinary action so moments that are just too big the funeral for a 30 year old mother of three that's too big believe it you can believe when I say

I said I can't do this this moment is too much or have you ever heard a finer sermon than when pastor john preached jose's funeral people walked away I remember gordon taylor telling me I do not know how he did that I've never heard anything like that isaiah 40 verse 29 is the answer he gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak and so yes there are times when god's people when we soar on wings like eagles we do things that we could never do and so they're not running that's flying that's not normal that's impossible there are moments when god says weak as you are i will carry you i will carry you the first time this phrase soaring on wings like eagles is used is in exodus 19 and it's talking about god taking his people out of egypt and they go to the others now they're on the other side of the red sea and they went from a slave people to a free people with their enemies dead behind them and god says i carried them like like i made them sore on wings like eagles i carried them like eagles so there are moments when we are on the other side of the red sea and we say i have no idea how i got here i have no idea how i did this i know i have no idea how i made it through and the lord that everlasting god says it was me when you were weak i was strong and my grace is sufficient for you so that's the promise what do we do then well we bring we bring our weakness to him you bring your weariness to him you bring yourself to him those who hope in the lord will renew their strength amen they will that's a promise we need to take in that's a promise we need to believe what a good god and what a kind promise you don't have to despair there is strength there's promised help for you let's pray heavenly father we do thank you for this promise i pray that you would give us faith to believe it faith to put our hope in you pray that this week when we do feel overwhelmed when we feel weak that we would you would you would bring to mind this promise and help us then to trust and to act help us not to rely upon our own strength your pleasure is not in the horses and the strength of men but you delight in those who fear your name and trust you so let us be those kind of people this week i pray in jesus name amen