

# *THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## **MOTIVATIONAL LESSONS** **“Lord, Give Me Strength”**

### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13). Welcome to our study of God’s strength. In the Christian life, we need strength from God to live faithfully every day. Do you ever find times in your life when you are not as strong as you should be as a Christian? Do you feel like, at times, that your strength has been zapped, and you find yourself in a lull or a rut? You really don’t know how you got there, but you know that you desperately need to get out of it? Those are times when we might cry out to God, “Lord, give me strength.” But what is it that causes us to be weak? And where can we get strength? Are there passages that can help us in the midst of weakness to overcome these things? Absolutely there are.

Today let’s turn our attention to God’s Word, the Bible, as the source of all strength. To understand how we can be stronger and better equipped to live faithfully, we must understand what it is that causes our weakness. When we find ourselves at times of weakness, we need to ask, “How did we get here? What is it that has zapped our strength as Christians, and how can we overcome such challenges?” What causes us to be weak, as children of God? Here are some things that the Bible says can cause weakness.

Our reliance upon the world and material things can cause us to be weak. Paul said to the Christians in Galatia, “How is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?” (Gal. 4:9). Why were those Christians growing weak? Why weren’t they as strong as they should have been? It was because they had turned from God back to the weak and beggarly elements of the world. Our trust in the world, in pleasure, and in things of that nature to save us will always make us weak. We see several examples of this in Scripture. We see men and women who put their trust in things other than God, and then became weak. Think about Balaam. He had great potential. In Numbers 22 we read about Balaam, and we see him saying, “I will not turn to the right hand or the left. I will do and say only what God said.” Yet about ten chapters later he dies in battle against the people of God. Why? It is because Balaam gave in to the world (lusts, pleasures, and desires) and fell away from God. Think about Demas. Paul said, “Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world” (2 Tim. 4:10). Think about Ananias and Sapphira. They lied to God out of a lust and desire for worldly goods—and they suffered physically. Anytime we put our trust in things other than God and the Bible, we will grow weak. When a person says, “My money will save me,” the truth is that it will not. Love of money is the root of all kind of evil, and God is not concerned with how much or how little money we have. God is concerned about us being faithful. When we look to governmental leaders to save us, we will be weak and disappointed. When we look to anything or anyone but God, we can rest assured that we will become weak.

Another thing that Scripture says will cause us to be weak is not worshiping God acceptably and regularly. In 1 Corinthians 11:30 Paul said, “For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.” What reason? Some Christians were not showing up to

worship God regularly, and they were not worshiping God acceptably. They were not remembering His Son's death as they should have been. Not worshiping God regularly and acceptably brings weakness. Someone might say, "I know that Hebrews 10:25 says that we are not to forsake the assembly, but sometimes I go and I don't get anything out of it." If we are not getting anything out of worship, then we are missing out. We are not doing our part, because God tells us that worshiping Him is a great source of strength. Is there power in the preaching of God's Word? Romans 1:16 says that God's Gospel is the power unto salvation. Is there strength to be gained from praying together as God's people? Yes, there is. We gain strength from that (Heb. 4:16). Is there strength to be gained from singing songs of praise to God, and from fellowshiping with other Christians? The Bible says there is (Heb. 3:12; 10:24). So perhaps our weakness has to do with the fact that we are not worshiping God regularly and acceptably. Do you come to worship every time the doors are open? Do you worship God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mk. 12:30)? If not, I can guarantee you that this will be a source of weakness because power is found in such things since you know that God says to do it, and you are not living up to the will of God.

Another source of weakness is the fact that some simply have not had time to grow in Christ. In 1 Corinthians 8 and Romans 14, we see teaching about "the weaker brother." Some who were new converts were weak in the faith. They had not had time to grow, so they were weak. Maybe your weakness is because you have not yet had time to grow. Do not let that be an excuse. You need to take every opportunity that is made available to you if you are feeling weak because you are a new convert. You need to have the mindset of Jeremiah, who said, "Your words were found, and I did eat them. They were to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart" (Jer. 15:16). You need to have the mindset of the Bereans who "searched the Scriptures daily to see if these things were true" (Acts 17:11). Perhaps your weakness is due to the fact that you are a new convert. Do not let that be an excuse. Rather, let it be a motivating factor for you to grow as a Christian.

It also may be the case that some are weak because they have not taken advantage of opportunities to grow. For those who have been in the Lord's body twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years, but have not grown as Christians and have not increased their knowledge and faithfulness, I can guarantee that their weakness is due to spiritual lethargy. Those people are not going anywhere. They are staying in a rut instead of moving forward as Christians. The Bible says, "Let us go on to perfection" (Heb. 6:1). Maybe your weakness is because you have not decided to get up and grow. Hebrews 5:12 is one of the strongest rebukes in the Bible. The writer said, "Though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food." In verse 14 he went on to say that those Christians should have had their "senses exercised to discern both good and evil." If people are weak, perhaps it is because they have not decided to get up and grow. In 1 Corinthians 3:1-4 we see a picture of the church in Corinth, which had a multitude of problems. But do you know what the main problem was? It was that the Christians were still acting like babies. They had not grown. The Bible says that as newborn babes, we are to "desire the pure milk of the word, that we may grow thereby." We find a powerful passage in 2 Peter 3:18 about our need to grow as Christians. Peter said, "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." We need to ask ourselves, "Have we done anything to grow? Are we studying our Bibles regularly? Are we working in the kingdom? Are we doing things that God wants us to do? Or, are we sitting by, waiting for God to do it all, and hoping it will happen?" We must get out and do our part.

Sometimes we are weak because we allow our fleshly lusts and desires to draw us away. In Matthew 26:41, as Jesus was speaking to His disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, He said, "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." He knew that they were going to face temptations of the flesh. He knew that the flesh sometimes is weak and needs to be strengthened. Many people in the Bible fell away because of fleshly lusts. Think about Solomon. What was it that caused the wisest man ever to have lived to fall away from God? It was his lust for his many wives. We read about how they drew him away from God, and how he was not faithful. Solomon's flesh was weak. Think about Peter. He was weak in the flesh. They asked him in regard to Jesus, "Weren't you with this Man?" "No, I don't know Him." "Are you sure, because your speech betrays you?" "Not, not me!" The Bible says that he began to curse and swear, "I do not know the Man!" Why did he do that? Peter did not want to die. His flesh was weak. Maybe we have an addiction or a passion that we have not learned to control. Maybe we have a love for the world and the things in it. Until we let go of such things, and fully commit to God, we will be weak.

Another source of weakness discussed in the Scriptures is Satan. In Luke 22:31-32 Jesus said to Simon, "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I prayed for you that your faith will not fail." What was it that could cause Simon Peter to fall away? Satan is an active adversary who is trying to cause us to become weak. Think about what he did to Job. He took away all that Job had—all his wealth and all of his livelihood. As if that was not enough, he caused all of his children to die when a great storm came and killed them. Ultimately he also took away his health. Why did all of that happen? Satan was the cause. He was trying to get Job to give up on God and to curse Him. Satan was the cause behind Peter's sin. Satan was the cause of Judas' sin. They gave in to the temptation, but Satan was right there, holding it in front of them. Satan might be trying to make each one of us weak. We need to realize that we must resist him "steadfastly in the faith" (1 Pet. 5:7-9).

Our trials also can make us weak if we do not realize the value in them. In 2 Corinthians 12:8-9 Paul dealt with the thorn in the flesh that he had. He prayed to God three times to ask Him to remove that thorn. Paul felt like that thorn was making him weak. But such was not the case. God said, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). The trials and difficulties that we face can make us stronger. Someone might say, "I'm weak because I'm facing this disease," or "I'm weak because I have this thorn in the flesh." If we look at it like that, then we will be weak. But if we will look at the value of such trials, we can see that those types of things actually can help us get to Heaven. "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials" (Jas. 1:2). If we will use our trials properly, they should not make us weak, but instead should strengthen us in our faith. It depends on how we look at such things.

How does a person who is weak spiritually, who is struggling, or who is in a rut, find the strength to deal with the challenges and difficulties of this life? First and foremost, God must be the major source of our strength. We will find no strength to live faithfully and do what God wants us to do, outside of God Himself. Hebrews 13:5-6 teaches us,

"Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' So we may boldly say: 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?'"

If we live our lives correctly by getting covetousness out of them, God said, "I will never leave you." Where is the source of our strength? It is in the fact that God has promised to help us in this life. The God Who said, "Let there be light!" and light came into the world, is there to help us. The God Who sent His own Son to die for our sins is the major source

of our strength, and is no farther away than the words of the Bible, the avenue of prayer, and the mind of Christ that we find in Scripture. If we are going to find strength, we need to look to God as the source of that strength.

We also need to look to Jesus Christ as a source of strength. In Philippians 4:13 Paul wrote about the joy of Christianity, and said, "I can do all things through Him [Christ] who strengthens me." How was Paul able to do the things he did? How was he able to give up everything and follow Christ completely? How was he able to be afloat in the sea? How was he able to take the beatings he received? How was it that he was able to keep going, even when people ran him out of town? It was because he could say, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." How true it is today that if we are going to overcome the world, we must look to Christ. Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:16-17, "At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me." God had not forsaken Paul, but was right there with him. God knew the struggles that Paul was facing. Christ strengthens us as we live our lives by His Word, which is all powerful (Heb. 4:12). Christ strengthens us as we have "the mind of Christ" (Phi. 2:5). Christ strengthens us as we follow His perfect example (1 Pet. 2:22). If we want strength, we must look to God and to Christ as the sources of our strength.

Another way that we can gain strength is prayer. The avenue of prayer is a great source of strength for Christians. Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Where can we find help? How can we get through this life? Jesus taught us that we should go to the throne of God, because He will help (Heb. 2:18). Christ is able to aid those who are tempted, since He has suffered just as we have. Thus, prayer should not be counted out as a valuable source of strength. Jesus said to Peter, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat" (Lk. 22:31). What did Jesus do to help Peter? He said, "I have prayed for you, that your faith will not fail." Prayer was the source of strength Jesus used in enabling Peter to be everything God wanted him to be. We must not count out the power of prayer. James 5:16 says, "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." Thus, prayer can help give us strength in our times of weakness. We can know that we can talk to the God of Heaven and cast all our cares on Him (1 Pet. 5:7). The fact that He cares is a great source of strength in and of itself.

Another source of strength to which we can turn in times of weakness is the Scriptures. God's Word is able to aid us and make us strong. In Acts 20:32 Paul told the elders in Ephesus, "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified." Speaking to those elders who would face great challenges, and whom Paul likely knew he never would see again, he commended them to God and the Word of His grace. Hebrews 4:12 says, "The word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The Word of God is our source of strength. If we find ourselves in a time of weakness, and if we are struggling, what is the best thing we can do? We must turn to God in prayer. And we must turn to His Word to see what God has to say concerning the matter.

Another source of strength that we must not count out is other Christians. Faithful Christians can be a great source of strength for us today. Hebrews 3:12-13 tells us,

"Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called 'Today,' lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

We are to “exhort one another daily.” We are to encourage, build up, and lift up one another in the Christian life. In essence, Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 that it is not good for a man to walk alone. If he is out there alone and he falls into a ditch, there is no one to help him out. But if he has someone there with him, that person can help him. If he is overtaken by thieves, he can ward them off if he has help. A three-fold cord cannot quickly be broken. There is strength in numbers. Hebrews 12:12 tells us that we are to “lift up the hands that are failing, and strengthen the knees that are weak.” How we need to use other faithful Christians who are trying to live the Christian life to gain strength!

Our faith also is a source of strength. How is it that we can overcome the world? In 1 John 5:4 we read, “This is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.” Our faith is able to overcome the world. It is able to give us strength. Faith comes from the Word of God. Let’s think about some passages that can help us in regard to specific areas of weakness. Why are some people weak? Some are weak because of loneliness. They feel like they are going down the road by themselves. If you are struggling with loneliness, realize that you are not alone, and then turn to Psalm 23.

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.”

We are not alone. The Lord has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Heb. 13:5-6). If we struggle with loneliness, we need to open the Word of God and realize that God is with us. He has promised to help us and aid us. Just knowing that God is helping us in our struggles lets us realize that we are not alone.

Sometimes we struggle with anxiety or worry. Anxiety is a big problem today. There are a lot of people who are on pins and needles about almost everything. There are a lot of people who cannot live their daily lives because they are so anxious and worried about what might happen. The Bible has the answer to that as well. In Philippians 4:6 we are told, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.” We are not to be anxious. We do not need to get in a dizzy about things. Rather, we should “cast all our prayers upon the Lord” (1 Pet. 5:7). We must not get anxious, but should pray to God to ask Him to help us with our problems.

What about weakness related to discouragement or depression? Does the Bible have anything to say about those things? Yes, it does. In Luke 18:1 Jesus spoke specifically about these things when he said, “Men always ought to pray and never lose heart.” Prayer helps us deal with discouragement, and helps us overcome the problems that we face in this life. We must realize that ultimately, “all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28). This helps us overcome discouragement because we know that God is there, and He is working things out. We can pray to Him and ask Him for help.

What about death—such as the death in a person’s family, the death of a loved one, or the death of a friend? Those things sometimes bring weakness to our lives. How do we view such deaths? If the person was a Christian, we can deal with the issue according to God’s Word, which tells us that such a person was right with God. In the Bible, the death of a child of God is never seen as we sometimes see it. Rather, it is seen as a blessing and as a very precious thing. Revelation 14:13 says, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.’” In Psalm 116:15 we find encouragement and strength when dealing with the death of a loved one: “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.”

Another major source of discouragement is the problem of sin. The Bible also has the cure for that. If we have trouble in our lives that is related to sin, God's Word can help us with that problem. Sin does indeed bring discouragement. "The way of the transgressor is hard" (Prov. 15:3). But if we deal with sin according to God's Word, we can rid our lives of sin and the discouragement that accompanies it. The Bible says in Hebrews 8:12, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." If we obey the Gospel, God will not hold our sins against us. The point of time at which our sins are forgiven is the point of baptism. In Acts 2:37 the Jews who had killed Christ cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter told them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (vs. 38). If a person has never obeyed the Gospel, to overcome the weakness related to sin he must hear God's Word, believe that Jesus is the Son of God, repent of things in his life that are not right, confess Christ's name before men, and be baptized to wash away sins. If a Christian has sin in his life, he needs to heed Peter's advice to Simon, who tried to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit with money. Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you!" Simon was lost. Don't you know that was discouraging to him? What else did Peter say? He told Simon to repent and pray so that the evil thoughts of Simon's heart might be forgiven.

Are you dealing with the sin problem in your life? Most discouragement and most weakness probably comes because we are trying to hide some sin, or because we aren't really living the way we ought to. God knows that, and we do, too. If you have never obeyed the Gospel, more than anything you need to become a child of God. If you are facing weaknesses in your life because you know that you have sin in your life, and you have not dealt with that sin, you will find no strength until you make it right. In Acts 8 the Ethiopian eunuch obeyed the Gospel and "went on his way rejoicing" (vs. 39). He was a man who gained strength because he submitted to God's will and did what God said. Then, his life had a new outlook. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). When we think about times in our lives when we are weak, and when we cry out to God, "Lord, give me strength," let's do what God says. Let's turn to Him and to His Word through the avenue of prayer so that we can live our lives according to the will of God. Is your strength low? If it is, turn to God as the source of all strength.

**Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

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## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “LORD, GIVE ME STRENGTH”

1. What is the message contained in Philippians 4:3?
2. Against what is Galatians 4:9 warning Christians?
3. According to 2 Timothy 4:10, what had Demas done that had caused the apostle Paul much grief and trouble?
4. In 1 Corinthians 11:27-30, Paul alluded to the fact that improper attitudes and/or actions regarding worship could have a deleterious effect on a person. What was that effect?
5. What does Hebrews 10:25 admonish Christians **not** do to do?
6. According to Romans 1:16, what is the Gospel?
7. According to Mark 12:30, how much should we love God?
8. Judging by Jeremiah's remarks in Jeremiah 15:16, what was the prophet's attitude toward God's Word?
9. In Acts 17:11, why were the Christians in Berea commended?
10. What does 2 Peter 3:18 admonish Christians to do?
11. According to 1 Pet. 5:9, when Satan tempts us, how are we to react?
12. In 2 Corinthians 12:8-9 Paul mentioned a problem that he was having, as well as a request he had made of God regarding that problem. What was Paul's problem?
13. In 2 Corinthians 12:9 God replied to Paul's request (from 2 Corinthians 12:8) regarding help with his problem. What was God's reply?
14. In Hebrews 13:5, what promise is made to Christians?
15. In 2 Timothy 4:16 Paul wrote, “At my first defense, no one stood with me, but all forsook me.” According to the next verse (vs. 17), who had **not** forsaken Paul?
16. According to Hebrews 2:18, what is Jesus able to do for those people who are tempted?
17. What does James 5:16 have to say about prayer?
18. What does Luke 18:1 have to say about prayer?
19. What does Hebrews 12:12 admonish us to do?
20. What, according to 1 John 5:4, is “the victory that has overcome the world”?