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## The Secret to Strength in Perilous Times

**By David Wilkerson**

September 28, 2009 When the world seems to be shaking, there will arise a people who know how to maintain their strength in the midst of it all. These are people who draw near to the Lord in times of crisis.

According to Scripture, it won't matter to these people if the moon and stars fall from the sky, or if the mountains quake and fall into the sea. They will still have faith in the Lord to save them, and they will not have their faith shaken by anything that comes.

In Psalm 31, David introduces a phrase to God's people: "the secret of thy presence." David writes:

"Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men! *Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence* from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues" (Psalm 31:19-20, my italics).

David is saying something very profound here to the body of Christ. David is telling us, in essence: "All true strength comes from drawing near to the Lord. Indeed, the measure of our strength is proportionate to *our nearness to him*."

Simply put, the closer we are to Jesus, the stronger we're going to be. In fact, all the strength we are ever going to need will come through our secret life of prayer.

Scripture says if we will simply draw near to Christ, he will draw near to us. And by drawing near to him, we will be given a fresh supply of strength daily. That is the "secret of his presence" that David refers to in Psalm 31.

You see, the devil greatly fears the Lord's presence in our lives. He trembles at the very thought of a believer's nearness to Jesus. So, when his demonic hordes see you breathing out prayers and drawing near to the presence of your heavenly Father, all of hell takes note:

"The Lord is with this believer. He has obtained the divine presence. What can we do against him now?"

You would have to be totally blind not to see the judgment that is now coming upon America and the world.

For this reason, Satan will do everything in his power to rob you of the Lord's presence. It is why he makes so many attempts to bog down your soul with worries about the future.

Simply put, the enemy of your soul wants you drained of all strength. So he will use anything he can, even "good" things, to keep you away from spending time alone with Jesus. He knows your time with Christ enables you to endure fear and anxiety, even in this worrisome time.

The whole world is aware we are facing very difficult times as never before in history. As I write this, the world is finally acknowledging we are headed for incredible changes. As believers, we each are faced with an important question: "How near am I to Jesus in this hour?"

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I believe that when things are unsettled, the most powerful testimony is that the Christian is wholly at peace. While the rest of society is in a panic — fainting, in some cases even dying, from fear — the praying believer will be growing continually stronger. It will be so because that godly servant is receiving more and more encouragement from the Holy Spirit. The Bible speaks of that which can't be shaken!

If you want to be able to stand steadfast in the storm, Scripture's counsel is simple: You must have the Lord's presence in your life daily.

How much quality time do you spend alone with Jesus? Are you growing closer to him with each passing day? Do you pray without ceasing — that is, to silently call out to him throughout the day and evening? He promises to hear your cry, even when uttered in weakness.

You may say to me, "I think I'm well prepared for any storm. After all, I'm a faithful witness for the Lord. I'm not ashamed of the gospel. And I live a clean, moral life. I tithe, I read my Bible, and I attend church regularly."

It is possible to be a believer and yet remain distant from the Lord. The fact is, if you don't spend time with him — if you don't draw on his strength — your heart will faint. Your words will have little or no power or results; your testimony will be lifeless. Why? Because you will have drifted away from your source of strength.

Don't make the mistake of measuring your walk with Christ by your good works or ministry rather than by his presence in your life. You simply cannot be more pleasing to the Lord — more fulfilled or at the center of his will — than by the simple act of drawing near to him in prayer.

We know this from the apostle Paul's life. Paul faced many hard, perilous times. This godly man knew what it meant to lose everything: to be hungry and thirsty, to suffer deprivation, to be in poverty, to be abandoned, to lie chained in a dark, damp prison cell, alone and forsaken even by some of his close friends.

Paul did not faint. In fact, the apostle grew stronger through each trial. How could this be? It happened because Paul knew this secret to getting and maintaining true strength.

Paul testified: "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. *Notwithstanding* the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me...And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever" (2 Timothy 4:16–18, my italics).

When Paul uses the word *notwithstanding* in this passage, he means simply, "in spite of." He is telling us, "The Lord stood with me and strengthened me in spite of all the troublesome times I faced."

Paul knew that if he drew near to the Lord, Christ would honor him by standing with him. The apostle declared, in effect: "Everywhere I turned, there was trouble and distress. Yet, when others let me down — when I was alone and all I could see were hard times — the Lord came to me and poured his strength into me. He delivered me from my fears. He gave me an assurance he would keep me from every evil work, and he will continue to keep me until I get to heaven."

Paul thrilled to see his spiritual children grasping this idea of *notwithstanding* in their lives. Year after

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year, he saw the Lord strengthening them to be able to stand steadfast in the midst of even the most difficult times.

Beloved, you can't obtain this kind of assurance and strength anywhere but in the presence of the Lord himself. We know Paul was in constant communion with Christ through prayer, and that is why evil news or trials could not shake him. Every time Paul faced another terrible trial, he escaped to prayer, running to Jesus to unburden his heart.

The writer of Hebrews praises the testimony of those believers who were strengthened through faithful prayer: "Ye endured a great fight of afflictions...ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions...and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods" (Hebrews 10:32-34).

Think about it: The people being described here had lost their homes, their livelihoods, everything. And yet they could testify along with their pastor, Paul, "*Notwithstanding* the hard times — in spite of every trial that came our way — the Lord stood with us. He came daily to give us all the strength we needed to overcome."

Dear saint, let me ask you: Do you have a notwithstanding in your life? Have you come to the place where you can say, "In spite of it all, I know Jesus will keep me in hard times. And he will give me everything I need because he is my source of strength."

Paul learned this secret of strength at his conversion. After being blinded on the road to Damascus, he spent three days fasting and praying, determined to experience the actual presence of this Lord who had revealed himself to him.

It was then the Lord directed a believer named Ananias, "Go, minister to Paul." "For, behold, he prayeth" (Acts 9:11). Scripture next says of Paul, "Saul increased the more in strength" (9:22).

We see this truth illustrated in a parable of Jesus about the man who seeks bread from his friend at midnight. The man had no bread himself, but he knew that his friend had all the bread he needed. So he kept pounding and knocking on the door until his friend got up, opened the door and gave him bread.

Beloved, that friend with the bread is Jesus. He sticks closer than a brother, and he will supply us with everything we need. This includes not only food, clothing and shelter (see Matthew 6), but also encouragement, strength and peace.

The Bible makes it all so clear: There is a certain, specific preparation we all should be making right now, and that is to start building up our faith and spiritual strength. The only way to do this is by drawing near to Jesus in prayer. We simply won't get the strength we need any other way.

David instructs us, "Them that trust in thee before the sons of men...thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence" (Psalm 31:19-20). It is time to shut ourselves in with Christ and pour out our hearts to him daily.

When the fury of the storm strikes, each of us will need our own supply of strength. When we are in the midst of the storm, none of us will be able to make it on the strength of anyone else. We won't be able to draw on our mate, our pastor, our friend, even a true prophet of God.

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We see this truth illustrated in Jesus' parable of the foolish virgins. When the virgins tried to borrow oil from their wise counterparts, they were told, "Go and buy oil for yourselves. We don't have enough for both us and you too."

Do you hear what Jesus is saying in this parable? He is warning all of his children: "No one else has enough faith to carry you. You have to have your own supply of belief and trust in me."

Dear saint, it is so very simple: *You need your own supply of strength. Yet you can't get this by merely listening to sermons or teaching tapes.* And you can't get it just by being involved in corporate worship or doing good works. You get it by being alone with the Lord in his presence.

I speak now to every Christian: The time has come for you to draw near to Jesus as never before. You need his presence more than ever before.

The Psalmist says of those who appear before the Lord in Zion: "They go from strength to strength" (Psalm 84:7). We are being told, "The praying believer will not faint in hard times. He is going to grow stronger and stronger because he trusts in God before the sons of men."

I close with these powerful words from Isaiah:

"Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?"

"There is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.

"Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:28-31).