

# What Does It Mean To Be “Spiritually Strong”?

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

## Introduction

- A. What is your goal in Christ?
  - 1. Heaven? How do you expect to get there?
  - 2. The same way Jesus did - Phil. 2:5-12; 1John 2:3-6
- B. We all need the same kind of spiritual strength He had in order to make it.
  - 1. We may not be required to have the same measure, but we must have the same kind.
- C. Understanding what it means to be spiritually strong.
  - 1. What is spiritual strength?
  - 2. What are its characteristics?
  - 3. How does one obtain it?
  - 4. How do the strong conduct their lives?

## I. WHAT IS SPIRITUAL STRENGTH?

- A. How shall we define spiritual strength?
- B. Recognition of different aspects as used in the Scriptures.
  - 1. "absolute" strength
  - 2. "momentary" strength
  - 3. "relative/doctrinal" strength
- C. Absolute strength: the state of being mature in the faith and the practice of it
  - 1. Rom. 15:1; Heb. 5:14
  - 2. Requires knowledge of the will of God in the Scriptures.
    - a. 2Tim. 2:15, 3:16-17
  - 3. His faith is made manifest in his work - James 2:14-18, 21-25
  - 4. Note that spiritual strength is not defined by age but by development.
- D. Momentary strength: the state of a high point in one's relationship with God.
  - 1. 1Cor. 9:24-27; Phil. 4:11-13
  - 2. Whether weak or strong, we all go through high and low points during our walk with God.
  - 3. We feel strong during the high points, whether we are strong or weak in absolute terms or in reality.
  - 4. These are important and positive times; however, momentary strength should not deceive us into thinking that we are always or even absolutely strong.
- E. Relative/doctrinal strength: believing that a given practice may be performed.
  - 1. Rom. 14; 1Cor. 8
  - 2. In these passages, the strong believe that they have the liberty to perform a given action.
  - 3. The weak believes it would be wrong for him to participate.
  - 4. If he despises the weak or causes them to stumble, he is strong in doctrine, but weak in the practice of it.
  - 5. The weak brother who forgoes the liberty is weak in doctrine but strong in his personal faith.

6. Therefore, doctrinal strength is not the same as spiritual strength.
7. Rom. 14:2-3, 12-13; 1Cor. 8:1-4, 7-10
- F. For our discussion today, we focus mostly on absolute or spiritual strength.
- G. We ought to recognize, of course, that as in all things, each person has strong and weak areas.
  1. One can be strong in the faith and have some weaknesses in practice that need strengthening.
  2. One can feel strong at any given moment and not necessarily be spiritually strong.
  3. We all have our gifts/talents, and must work on cultivating those while not neglecting our weaker areas.
  4. The Lord gives us abilities, knows our strengths, and tasks us accordingly.
    - a. Matt. 25:14-30 - We must use what we have been given.
    - b. Rom. 12:3-8 - We must use what we have been given to the best of our ability.
    - c. 1Cor. 12:14-24, 27-30 - We must use what we have been given to the best of our ability for the well-being of the whole body.
  5. He expects us to use our abilities to increase our strength and expand our usefulness.

## II. CHARACTERISTICS OF SPIRITUAL STRENGTH

- A. What are the characteristics of spiritual strength? How do we become spiritually strong?
  1. To say I want to be spiritually strong or I want to be mature in the faith is a rather vague and relative goal.
- B. Goals of one who wishes to become spiritually strength: imitates Jesus.
  1. 1Cor. 11:1; Phil. 2:5
  2. Jesus is the ultimate example of spiritual strength; to become more like Him is to become spiritually stronger.
- C. Knows God and His will - Matt. 4:1-11; John 7:28-29
  1. We can be strong and stand against the Devil by knowing God's will.
    - a. Eph. 6:10-17
- D. Does the will of God - Matt. 26:39; John 4:34, 6:38
  1. Jesus not only knew God's will, He fulfilled it - Eph. 3:11; John 19:30
  2. If we desire to be spiritually strong, we must obey the will of God.
    - a. Rom. 6:16-18, 12:1; Gal. 2:20
- E. Loves - John 13:1; 1John 3:16
  1. How do we manifest the same kind of love Jesus did? - 1Cor. 13:1-7
- F. Serves humbly - John 13:1-8, 12-17
  1. Jesus often demonstrated that the way of the Kingdom is counter intuitive to human reasoning.
  2. While those who are strong in worldly terms demand to be served and are often arrogant, Jesus did not behave this way; instead, He measured strength by service to others.
  3. He served, and was not served.

4. Established the great reversal of human reasoning -- those who were humble would be exalted, those who exalted themselves will be humbled - Matt. 23:12
  6. In the Kingdom, he who would be great must be the servant.
    - a. Luke 22:25-27
    - b. Hos diakoneo - "A title form meaning 'the one who serves'" (Strong's - 1247)
- G. Is meek - Matt. 11:29
1. While the term today often refers to a pushover, it was not so in the ancient world. Meek is: a mild person, not by cowardice, but strength under control.
  2. Exemplified by the cross - Matt. 27:38-43; Luke 23:34; John 19:8-11
  3. The world demonstrated its power by hanging Jesus on a cross and deriding Him.
  4. Jesus manifested His strength by allowing them to do it, and by asking that they be forgiven.
  5. Jesus had the victory by keeping his power and passion under control
  6. The same must be true of us.

### **III. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SPIRITUALLY STRONG**

- A. Spiritual strength comes with obligations.
- B. Bearing with the weaknesses of the weak - Rom. 15:1-3
  1. The strong are not to despise the weak, but bear with them and help encourage them.
  2. The chief concern of the strong is not for himself, but for his neighbor, for the good of others.
    - a. Rom. 15:2; 1Cor. 10:24
- C. Abounding more and more.
  1. 1Thes. 4:1, 9-10; Phil. 3:12-16; 2Peter 3:18
  2. Those who are strong (mature) will think this way - Phil. 3:15
- D. More is required - Luke 12:48
  1. If we have grown in the faith toward maturity, we must understand that God is going to expect more of us than He did previously.
  2. We cannot expect to do what we've always done and be found pleasing; we must put our new abilities and strengths to use.

#### Conclusion:

- A. It should be the goal of every Christian to become spiritually strong
- B. Let each examine himself soberly.
  1. Gal. 6:3-5; James 1:22-25
  2. To deceive ourselves into thinking we are strong if we are weak is dangerous.
  3. To believe ourselves weak if we are strong is also counterproductive.
  4. We must determine where we are in our walk with God so that we may know where we have to go.