

Strength In The Storm

PART 2: THE STRUGGLE PRODUCES STRENGTH

Strength in the storm doesn't come without a struggle. It is the struggle that causes us stress and strain as we are trying to find our footing and a firm foundation to stand upon in the midst of our storms. Most assuredly, we can all agree that being in a storm is not the place where any of us desires to be. Oddly enough, it is the struggle that produces strength. To illustrate this point, let us use an athlete, specifically a weightlifter. In order to become stronger as a weightlifter, it is absolutely necessary that strength be gained through the struggle of lifting heavier and heavier weights in the progression of getting stronger. Without the struggle and strain of heavier weights, the weightlifter does not gain the strength that they desire. The irony of it all, his or her struggle produces strength.

In this lesson, we're going to look at some individuals from the Bible with well-known stories of struggle, yet they persevered and thrived as they gained strength in the midst of their storm. It is our prayer that as we look at the lives of these individuals that we will learn the lessons of life that will help us gain strength from the struggles we endure while in the midst of our storms. Lastly, we will conclude this lesson with some specific strategies and mechanisms to cope with the storms of life.

People who struggled, survived and thrived beyond their storm!

Almost every person that God used mightily had some type of storm to deal with. Some of those include Noah, Abraham, the Israelites, Moses, Joshua, the judges, the disciples, and the list could go on and on. But to illustrate how one can be in the midst of a storm, struggle, survive, and thrive, let's look at the life of the following individuals.

David—The biblical exploits of David are well documented. David is known for both a lot of good things and some not-so-good things. However, if there's one thing that we know about David is that he has been acknowledged as a man after God's own heart. But even David could not escape struggling in the storms of life. Consider the following storms that David encountered:

- A battle with the Philistine Giant (1 Sam. 17:43-44)
- The murderous plot against him by King Saul (1 Sam. 18:8-10)

- The treasonous acts against him by his son Absalom, and the rape of Absalom's sister by his son Amnon (2 Sam. 15:2; Sam. 13:1; 22)
- Retribution against him for his adultery, deception, and murder of Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, his son died (2 Sam. 15:6-10; 15-18)

David can be labeled as the quintessential persona for storm living. It was David's unwavering faith in God that allowed him to survive these storms and so many others. David's retort in coming out of each of his storms was to honor God in worship and to write heartfelt psalms that expressed his complete trust in God, his sorrow, and the hope in God for deliverance and victory in every storm. As we all know, David wrote many of the psalms, but there are two that stand out more than all the others that express his accessing the power of God while he struggled in the storm and not only survived but thrived. *Psalms 23* and *Psalms 51* are probably the most telling examples of contrition and complete trust in God.

Joseph—*Joseph's life was filled with struggle in storms.* But even with all of the storms that he faced, he never stopped gaining strength through his struggle in the storm. In fact, at each step of the way or through each storm that came before him, he acknowledged that God was with him, and he believed that everything was going to work out in his favor. Because Joseph's life was a path towards saving the entire 12 tribes of Israel, namely his father Jacob, he endured hardship as a good soldier. Look at the struggles of Joseph...

- Hate and betrayal from His brothers (Gen. 37:18-20)
- Sold into slavery after being ambushed, abused, and dumped into a cistern by his brothers (Gen. 37:26-28)
- Lied on by Potiphar's wife (Gen. 39:1, 7, 12-21)
- Forgotten about by the Pharaoh's Butler (Gen. 40:12-14, 20-23)

The strength that Joseph attained as he struggled in the midst of his storms allowed him to become second in command only to Pharaoh in all of Egypt. No one would ever desire to go through what Joseph went through, but the calling upon his life almost demanded that he gain strength through his struggle for the purposes of surviving the storms of life to save his father, brothers, and, as we now know, the nation of Israel.

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Job—Job is a well-documented case of an individual who struggled in the midst of his storm but was able to be strengthened by his faith in God. We now know that Job never knew that it was God who allowed the storms of life to afflict him, and we also know that even in the absence of Job knowing this, Job's testimony is one

of the greatest examples of unbridled competence in God, regardless of his situation or circumstances.

- Loss of all his servants and livestock (Job 1:13-17)
- Death of all his children (Job 1:18-19)
- Discouragement from his wife (Job 2:9)
- Loss of bodily health (Job 2:7-8)

The bible says in Job 1:22, “*In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.*” In your times of struggle in the storms of life, could this be said of you, and would this be your testimony?

The Apostle Paul—Once Paul came to the knowledge that Jesus Christ was God's only begotten son and his savior, he was relentless in his pursuit of preaching and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Yes, Paul once persecuted people who believed in Jesus Christ, but since his personal encounter with Jesus, instead of causing storms for others, he is now confronted by struggles in his own storms. Paul exemplifies this one fact: once you have truly come to know Jesus Christ for yourself and have had a personal one-on-one encounter with him, you see the struggles and storms of life altogether differently.

- Shipwrecked (Acts 27)
- Snakebitten (Acts 28:1-3)
- Stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19)
- Jailed for doing the right thing (preaching the gospel, Acts 16:16-23)

Certainly, at this point, it is well documented that children of God are going to have struggles in the storms that come into their lives. Our contention is that we should not be afraid of the storms, but competent and confident in them because that is where our strength lies, and where the presence of the Lord is. To conclude this lesson on strength in the storm, let us now learn practical applications to live by on a daily basis.

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GAINING STRENGTH IN THE STORM THROUGH OUR STRUGGLES REQUIRES...

A. Be Anchored in Christ, The Word and the Holy Spirit: *Rooted, Not Shaken*

An anchor establishes a location in which a person or object is grounded in place. This is our Christ, he provides stability and the presence that keeps us in place even while the storms of life are raging. If you are anchored in Christ, the

storm has less chance of moving you from your place of peace. Anchors provide stability in the times and seasons of struggle. With an anchor, the struggle doesn't necessarily go away, but it is minimized until the Lord chooses to give us the strength to pull up anchor and proceed with gaining strength in the storm of life.

Scripture for being anchored in Christ:

- ✚ Colossians 2:6–8 — Rooted and built up in Him
- ✚ Hebrews 6:19 — “We have this hope as an anchor for the soul”
- ✚ Psalm 46:1–3 — “God is our refuge and strength...”
- ✚ Psalm 46; Isaiah 26:3; Galatians 5:22-23

The songwriters put it this way, *“There's a storm out on life's ocean and it's moving this old way, if your soul's not anchored in Jesus, you will surely drift away.”* And, there's another song that says, *“My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness; I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.”*

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B. Be Anchored by the Word and the Spirit

Being anchored in the Word and the Holy Spirit is altogether necessary if, during the struggle in the storm, we are going to gain strength. John 1:1 says, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”* To be anchored in Jesus is to be anchored in the word. Thus, to be anchored in the word is to have the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, because it was Jesus Christ himself who sent the power and presence of the Holy Spirit and caused him to dwell within us, according to *John 14:16:17*. So if you're in the midst of struggling, here is where your power comes from, Jesus Christ, his presence in our life as the word Incarnate, by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit whom he sent and planted within each and every one of us who believe on him.

(Other Scriptures that Anchor us in the Lord: Psalm 46; Isaiah 26:3; Galatians 5:22-23)

As we struggle in the midst of our storms, it is a part of this study for us to also provide practical tools and resources to equip us to handle or to struggle successfully while in the midst of our storms. Some of these tools are...

Tools for Strength in the Storm:

- ✚ Prayer and Scripture as stabilizing anchors
- ✚ The fruit of the Spirit as evidence of maturity
- ✚ Encouraging one another in community

Practical Application:

- ✚ Commit to daily quiet time in Scripture and prayer
- ✚ Identify one divisive area and ask: *How would Jesus respond?*
- ✚ Fast from political news or social media for a time to refocus on God's voice

C. Responding Like Christ in a Divided World

OK, here's where the rubber meets the road. The struggle we are confronted with in this present moment is how to respond to and treat those who are diametrically opposed to everything that we believe in and stand for. Currently, our world is divided politically, religiously, economically, socially, culturally, and racially. As we struggle with these ideologies, we must find out how Christ would respond in such a divided world, and here is what the word says we are to do.

- ✚ Romans 12:17-21 (don't repay evil for evil, live peaceably with everyone, and allow the Lord to have vengeance on our behalf)
- ✚ Matthew 5:9; 44-48 (be a peacemaker, and love your enemies and those that persecute you)
- ✚ Ephesians 4:1-6 (walk in love and unity of the Spirit as one body)

If it were easy to control our anger and tame our tongue, then everyone would be doing it. Unfortunately, there are many a Christian who have the deportment of the disciple Peter (a sharp tongue) within them. According to scripture, the tongue and our tempers are very hard to tame (James 3:8-10). Further considerations that we must employ in responding to this world as Christ would are as follows:

- Being peacemakers in a world of outrage
- Unity in the body of Christ over political identity
- Loving enemies and refusing to repay evil for evil

Some of the things we can discuss and consider as we gain strength from the struggle in the midst of our storm are:

- How can we disagree politically without being divisive spiritually?
- How do we live out our faith in a way that honors Christ above our ideologies?

Key Point: Our allegiance to Christ must transcend socio-political and socio-economic loyalties.

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D. God's Sovereignty amid Chaos

Objective: Grow trust in God's overarching plan, even when we feel powerless.

One of the main reasons why we have undertaken this lesson to study strength in the storm is because of the utter chaos that many people feel in this day and time while simply trying to survive and live life. But even now, we must trust the sovereignty of God. The struggle in our storm can be lessened when we trust and have faith in the sovereignty of our almighty God. However, when we don't trust God, and combine that with fear of what man is doing to hinder our progress and success, then the struggle is real. You cannot trust the sovereignty of God and fear man at the same time. Consider this powerful commentary from Joseph Caryl, the Puritan theologian:

THE absolute sovereignty of the Lord over us is enough to acquit him from doing us any wrong, whatsoever he doeth with us. Job saith only this, "*The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away.*" He is the sovereign Lord, therefore I have no reason to complain. He doeth it upon whom I have laid engagement—upon whom I have no tie at all to do this or that for me. He doeth it who may resolve all the reason of his own actions into his own will; he is the Lord.

Job said it this way of God's sovereignty: *Job 9:12 Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say unto him, What doest thou?* The sovereignty of God is our strength while we struggle. The following passages, covering both the Old and New Testaments, declare the might, power, and sovereignty of God

- Isaiah 40:28–31 (God's greatness)
- Romans 8:28–39
- *Key Truths:*
 - Nothing—no storm, no election outcome, no scandal—can thwart God's good purposes.
 - We are anchored in hope because God works all things for our good.

E. Kingdom Over Culture (*Citizens of a Higher Kingdom*)

We do not live for culture, nor are we culture citizens. Culture is a concept that encompasses the social behavior, institutions, and norms found in human societies. We are Kingdom Citizens! When we live with knowledge of the fact that we are citizens of the Kingdom of God, then the storms of life cannot hinder the prosperity that we will experience in our heavenly home. The songwriter put it this way, "*This world is not our home, we're just passing through, if heaven's not my home, then Lord what will I do? The angels beckon me from heaven's open door, and I can't feel at home in this world anymore.*" Nowhere in scripture (beyond the tree of life) is there an indication that we would live forever. In fact, the psalmist

said the days of our years are three score years and ten, and if by reason of strength they be four score years (*Psalms 90:10*). The key takeaway from what the word of the Lord has to say is that we should not fret or lose strength in the struggle because we were never intended to stay here forever. Every struggle in this life is temporary. Why become disheartened and discouraged over things and matters that are temporary? Since the days of Genesis, there has never been a storm that has lasted forever. We are citizens of a higher Kingdom, and that is the Kingdom of God. It truly is ours to enjoy righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost according to Romans 14:17.

Scripture:

- ✚ Philippians 3:20 — “Our citizenship is in heaven”
- ✚ John 17:14–18 — “In the world but not of the world”
- ✚ Matthew 6:33 — “Seek first the Kingdom of God...”

Practical Goals and objectives to live by in our current culture:

- ✚ Challenge the idolization of political ideologies
- ✚ Reorient identity around the Kingdom of God
- ✚ Promote discernment and humility in civic engagement

Possible Discussion Questions to consider:

- ✚ How does your identity in Christ impact how you engage politically?
- ✚ What does it mean to “seek first the Kingdom” in today’s climate?

F. Hope for the Future

The sinfulness of humanity will always put a blight upon current circumstances and situations in life. However, as long as there is hope in the Lord Jesus Christ, the possibilities for a brighter future are immeasurable.

Scripture: Revelation 21:1-5; Philippians 3:20

Encouragement:

- ✚ This world is not our home—our citizenship is in heaven
- ✚ God is sovereign over nations, kings, and presidents
- ✚ We are called to be salt and light, not flame-throwers

Key Closing Point: We have learned in these Bible study lessons that every storm has a purpose, and part of the purpose of being in a storm is for us to gain strength and to exit the storm with a testimony of God's power, goodness, mercy, and grace. Our struggles help us gain strength to endure the storm. The storms of life are temporary, but God's kingdom is eternal.

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