

Stronger Empowering your future – part 3

We started 3 weeks ago talking about Elijah – about how strong he was against the prophets of Baal but then how weak and depleted he got, to the point that he wanted to die. He fell into a state of deep discouragement.

God sent His angel to strengthen Elijah, not only once, but twice.

Opening Text: 1 Kings 19:7- - *7 And the angel of the Lord came back the second time, and touched him, and said, “Arise and eat, because the journey **is too great for you.**”* *8 So he arose and ate and drank; and he went in the **strength** of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God.*

I want to focus today on this statement the angel made:

V7b - “Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you”

The New Living Translation says, “*the journey ahead is too much for you*”.

1. Elijah faced ‘too much’

God knows the measure of our strength. He knows what we can bear, and He knows when something is *too great* or *too much*.

Where this world is going, I believe that more and more we will encounter things above the measure of our strength. At times, the journey will feel like it is ‘too much’. That is why it is so timely to talk about getting stronger in God!

2. David faced ‘too much’

Elijah had his moment in the ‘cave’, and so did David. David also had a moment when it all became too much and, like Elijah, he also hid in a cave. From that cave, he wrote **Psalm 142**.

V. 3a – “*When my spirit was overwhelmed within me*” ...

To be overwhelmed is to feel overpowered by the magnitude of what one is facing. We feel overwhelmed when we are confronted with more than we can handle.

V.4 - *Look on my right hand and see, for there is no one who acknowledges me; refuge has failed me; no one cares for my soul.*

We read the same complaint in Elijah’s story: “*only I am left*”. A sense of abandonment and loneliness can add to the weight of something being above our strength. It is so important it is to be connected, rather than isolated.

V.6 - *Attend to my cry, for I am brought very low; deliver me from my persecutors, for they are **stronger than I**.*

David was facing enemies who were stronger than him. This was a battle beyond the measure of his skill, beyond his experience level, above his strength.

3. Paul faced ‘too much’

2 Corinthian 1:8 - *For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened **beyond measure, above strength**, so that we despaired even of life.*

There are 10 words in the Greek language for suffering and Paul used 5 of them in this epistle. The most common word he used was ‘trouble’.

- a) The word ‘trouble’ in the Greek language is *thlipseōs*, which means: “narrow, confined or under pressure”

Paul experienced being in a narrow, tight spot, under pressure on a level that was excessive. It was *beyond measure and above strength*.

On another occasion, like Elijah and David, Paul also felt alone:

2 Timothy 4:16-17 - *¹⁶At my first defense, **no one stood with me, but all forsook me**. May it not be charged against them. ¹⁷**But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me**, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.*

- b) “we were burdened **beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life**” - We all have a measure of *ability*, a measure of *strength* and a measure of *pressure* we can tolerate. However, Paul faced pressure on a level for which he was not rated for.
- c) Elijah, David and Paul all faced things beyond their natural strength. However, a common thread in their stories is that they grew stronger, God upgraded their potential, God resourced their lives with the grace and power they needed to overcome.

In this same Epistle, the man who faced trouble beyond measure and strength, wrote:

2 Corinthians 2:14 - *Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ...*

2 Corinthians 4:8-9 - *We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—*

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 - *And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for **My strength is made perfect in weakness**.” Therefore, most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ Therefore I*

*take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For **when I am weak, then I am strong.***

God's strength manifests in our weakness. He infuses us with His ability and power.

Elijah, David and Paul, they all faced "too much". And so did, even Jesus.

4. Jesus faced "too much"

Luke 22:39-41 - *Coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed, and His disciples also followed Him. ⁴⁰When He came to the place, He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." ⁴¹And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, ⁴²saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." ⁴³Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, **strengthening Him.***

Jesus faced His moment of unbearable pressure at Gethsemane.

Gethsemane from Hebrew *gat – shemanin*: a place where olives grow and where olives are pressed. It is "*the place of the pressing*" as one translator put it.

This was pressure that no human being could bear. The cross was not above His divinity, but it was above His humanity. And just like with Elijah, David and Paul, Jesus also found Himself alone – but God sent His angel to strengthen Jesus.

Jesus knows

- what it is to be pressured beyond measure and above strength,
- What it is to be left alone (with His closest allies having a nap).
- What it is to be tempted to give up (although He didn't)

Conclusion

I believe that God wants to bring you to a place of STRENGTH.

- God wants you to have a faith that is robust and unshakable.
- God wants to enlarge your spiritual capacity.
- God wants to increase your 'PSI' rating
- God wants to get you ready for those times when the journey will seem *too much*

There's more in God for you.