

HCWO Sunday 11:00 AM 1/15/12

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Strength and being strong in the Lord

Judges 16:5-21 *The rulers of the Philistines went to her and said, “See if you can lure him into showing you the secret of his great strength and how we can overpower him so we may tie him up and subdue him. Each one of us will give you eleven hundred shekels of silver.” (5 rulers x 1100 shekels = 5500 days worth of wages or 15.68 years worth of wages)*

6 *So Delilah (Her name in Hebrew means “one who brings low or makes weak”) said to Samson (His Hebrew name means distinguished or strong), “Tell me the secret of your great strength and how you can be tied up and subdued.”*

7 *Samson answered her, “If anyone ties me with seven fresh thongs that have not been dried, I’ll become as weak as any other man.”*

8 *Then the rulers of the Philistines brought her seven fresh thongs that had not been dried, and she tied him with them. 9 With men hidden in the room, she called to him, “Samson, the Philistines are upon you!” But he snapped the thongs as easily as a piece of string snaps when it comes close to a flame. So the secret of his strength was not discovered.*

10 *Then Delilah said to Samson, “You have made a fool of me; you lied to me. Come now, tell me how you can be tied.”*

11 *He said, “If anyone ties me securely with new ropes that have never been used, I’ll become as weak as any other man.”*

12 *So Delilah took new ropes and tied him with them. Then, with men hidden in the room, she called to him, “Samson, the Philistines are upon you!” But he snapped the ropes off his arms as if they were threads.*

13 *Delilah then said to Samson, “Until now, you have been making a fool of me and lying to me. Tell me how you can be tied.”*

He replied, “If you weave the seven braids of my head into the fabric [on the loom] and tighten it with the pin, I’ll become as weak as any other man.” So while he was sleeping, Delilah took the seven braids of his head, wove them into the fabric 14 and tightened it with the pin.

Again she called to him, “Samson, the Philistines are upon you!” He awoke from his sleep and pulled up the pin and the loom, with the fabric.

15 *Then she said to him, “How can you say, ‘I love you,’ when you won’t confide in me? This is the third time you have made a fool of me and haven’t told me the secret of your great strength.”*

16 *With such nagging she prodded him day after day until he was tired to death.*

17 ***So he told her everything.*** *“No razor has ever been used on my head,” he said, “because I have been a Nazirite set apart to God since birth. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as any other man.”*

18 *When Delilah saw that he had told her everything, she sent word to the rulers of the Philistines, “Come back once more; he has told me everything.” So the rulers of the Philistines returned with the silver in their hands. 19 Having put him to sleep on her lap, she called a man to shave off the seven braids of his hair, and so began to subdue him. And his strength left him.*

20 *Then she called, “Samson, the Philistines are upon you!”*

He awoke from his sleep and thought, “I’ll go out as before and shake myself free.” But he did not know that the LORD had left him.

21 *Then the Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes and took him down to Gaza. Binding him with bronze shackles, they set him to grinding in the prison.*

You are responsible to God, the source of the strength of God in your lives. People are counting on you to not get weak, to not get tired.

One momentary decision in the moment of vulnerability and fatigue brought adversity for the rest of Sampson's life and to his whole generation.

Don't make the decisions at the time of vulnerability and fatigue when you're worn out. We need to stay strong in the Lord.

1. Vision and strength go together. Vision and strength are friends/partners, they go best together.

When Sampson lost his strength, his eyes were cut out, and he lost his vision. His days were reduced to grinding grain like an animal.

Vision from God is a powerful tool in our lives. God has a personal plan for your life. He has planted His dreams, visions, plans and purposes in your heart. Don't try to borrow someone else's dreams, someone else's vision.

Proverbs 29:18 *Where there is no revelation/vision, the people cast off restraint; but blessed is he who keeps the law.*

Jeremiah 29:11 *For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*

Don't give your strength to the immoral woman. Too many people live different lives on Friday and Saturday night versus Sunday morning. It is a vision problem. If you had a clear sense of God's vision for you, you wouldn't long for the things of the world.

Strength resources, sustains and supports vision. Vision gives purpose to strength.

Delilah was a paid plant to subvert (Hb. *Delilah*) and seduce Sampson. She was paid to wear him down and probe the source of his strength.

Beware, the enemy will send people, or situations, or things into your life to wear you down. He will nag us. He will get us to focus on our defeat. He will get us to focus on the things we don't have. He wants to wear us down and get us to give up.

Psalm 28:7 *The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song.*

The Lord is our strength.

Luke 4:1-14 *Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, 2 where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.*

3 *The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."*

4 *Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone.'"*

5 The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6 And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. 7 So if you worship me, it will all be yours." 8 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'" 9 The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. 10 For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; 11 they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" 12 Jesus answered, "It says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" 13 When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time. 14 Jesus returned to Galilee **in the power of the Spirit**, and news about him spread through the whole countryside.

Even Jesus' strength was dependent upon the Holy Spirit. The enemy even tried to wear Jesus down.

To flourish in strength:

- We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. He is the source of our strength.
- We need to be in the word daily.
- We need to pray daily.
- We need to be planted in the house of God, rooted and established in a strong church.
- We need to cultivate friends who are friends to our destiny. Not just sentimental attachments to our past to remind us of who we were, but friends who can help us move toward who we are becoming in Christ

2. We need strength for the internal battle.

Immorality, as well as any other sin (such as envy, jealousy, discouragement, resentment, addictions, bad habits, and other distractions) positions us for disaster. Be aware of your areas of weakness. Don't tolerate these margins. We need strength on the inside to win the internal battles that matter.

Proverbs 4:23 *Above all else, **guard your heart**, for it is the wellspring of life.*

Guard your heart against immorality, disappointment, resentment, distraction, envy, jealousy, and discouragement.

Allow God to purify your heart and bring you into a place of peace on the inside even in the midst of turmoil. Even if the external circumstances don't change, God is at work changing you on the inside.

Keep your heart pure and guard it well, for out of it flows the issues of life.

3. There are moments for disconnection and for divine exchange.

Isaiah 40:27–31 *Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel, “My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God”? 28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. 29 He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. 30 Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; 31 but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.*

Be prepared by hoping and waiting on God. Draw your strength from God. Wait patiently for the Lord. It is a different posture. It is dressed different. It is living out your private life differently in expectation of who God is and what God will do. God will exchange your weakness and weariness for strength as you trust and hope in Him.

God wants us strong for the road ahead. The enemy may pay off someone to distract us to lure us and wear us down. Whatever is wearing you down, see it for what it is—discouragement, hopelessness. Guard your reactions. Guard your language, especially sarcastic speech. God will correct things along the way. Make sure your confidence is in God.

Joshua 14:6-15 *Now the men of Judah approached Joshua at Gilgal, and Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, “You know what the LORD said to Moses the man of God at Kadesh Barnea about you and me. 7 I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh Barnea to explore the land. And I brought him back a report according to my convictions, 8 but my brothers who went up with me made the hearts of the people melt with fear. I, however, followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly. 9 So on that day Moses swore to me, ‘The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children forever, because you have followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly.’ 10 “Now then, just as the LORD promised, he has kept me alive for forty-five years since the time he said this to Moses, while Israel moved about in the desert. So here I am today, eighty-five years old! 11 I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I’m just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. 12 Now give me this hill country that the LORD promised me that day. You yourself heard then that the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified, but, the LORD helping me, I will drive them out just as he said.” 13 Then Joshua blessed Caleb son of Jephunneh and gave him Hebron as his inheritance. 14 So Hebron has belonged to Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite ever since, because he followed the LORD, the God of Israel, wholeheartedly. 15 (Hebron used to be called Kiriath Arba after Arba, who was the greatest man among the Anakites.)*
Then the land had rest from war.

Follow the example of Caleb. He refused to let the source of his strength be sapped. For vision without strength is just frustration.

2 Chronicles 7:14 *If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

The Lord will fight the battle for you. He will secure your victory.

Questions for discussion and application:

1. Do you have a clear sense of vision? What are the dreams, visions, plans and purposes that God has planted in your heart? Are you moving steadily toward them? Are you drawing upon God's strength to fulfill them? Or are you trying to accomplish God's plans and purposes with your own strength and not His? Who can you be accountable to with regard to God's vision for your life?
2. Is anything nagging you right now and wearing you down, making you weak? Are you vulnerable and tired? Is anything sapping your strength? What things people or situations has the enemy brought into your life to wear you down? What things are keeping you from fulfilling God's vision for your life? How can you avoid becoming tired and vulnerable? One of Samson's flaws was that he tried to go it alone. How can you help each other resist the enemy's attempts to wear you down?
3. How are you doing with regard to finding your strength in the Lord? Are you daily being filled with the Holy Spirit? Are you spending time in the Word daily? Are you taking time daily to pray? Are you firmly established in a strong church? Are you cultivating friends who are friends to your destiny? Or are your friends just dragging you down, dragging you back towards the past? How can you be accountable to each other in these areas?
4. How are you doing in the internal battle? What are your areas of weakness? What things do you need to allow God to purify in your heart? What can you do during this time of fasting to better cooperate with God as He cleanses your heart? How can you be a better guard over your heart from this point forward? Who will you be accountable to regarding the purity of your heart?
5. Have there been any prolonged delays in the fulfillment of God's vision for your life? How are you waiting and hoping in the Lord? Are you counting on Him to renew your strength? Have you invited Him to fight the battle for you? Are you counting on Him for your victory?