

Be Strong in the Lord

By :Elder Enoch Ofori Jnr

(Sabbath School)

In the build-up to a full-blown war, psychological warfare—or war of words—can be a very deadly weapon. When used effectively, it not only saps the confidence of combatants, but it can actually condition them into thinking that they are no match for the enemy, that they are finished.

In our spiritual struggle with Stan, we must not be unnerved by satanic propaganda. When he talks to undermine our faith, we must talk back to him as Jesus did in Matt. 4. By so doing, we will overcome him by “the sword of the Spirit” which is the Word of God (Eph. 6:17).

When the devil tells you that you are sick, say NO! insisting you were healed by His stripes 2000 years ago. When he says you are poor, tell him Christ became poor so you might be rich (2 Cor. 8:9). When he says you will die before your time, tell him Christ wrest from his hands the “power of death” 2000 years ago (Heb. 2:14-15; Rev. 1:18).

The tongue is a powerful organ (Jam. 3:8-10). It can be a faith builder and a faith breaker. You build and preserve faith when you don’t allow the devil to do all the talking. As believers in God’s sure promises, we need to ‘talk tough’ to indicate faith in Him.

When David confronted Goliath in faith, he matched his (Goliath’s) tough talk with an even tougher talk. Dismissing the gargantuan height and armour of the Philistine champion, he said: “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the Name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied”. ... All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD’s, and He will give all of you into our hands (1 Sam. 17:45, 47).

Earlier, he had rebutted Goliath’s taunt against Israel: “who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?” (verse 26).

Strengthened by faith in the LORD’s deliverance power, David eventually struck the Philistine with a sling stone and killed him to the surprise of all.

All the Old Testament heroes who accomplished great exploits to the glory of God developed strength through faith to do the impossible (Heb. 11:32-34).

Such was certainly the case when Nehemiah and the Jewish returnees from Babylon were rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem in the face of unrelenting opposition from Sanballat and Tobiah and their associates. They poked fun at them, “what are those feeble Jews doing? ... what they are building—if even a fox climbed up on it, he would break down their wall of stones!” (Neh. 4:1-3 NIV).

But Nehemiah and the determined Jewish returnees were undeterred and continued to rebuild the wall “till all of it reached half of its height” (vs. 6). In reply to their prayer (vs. 4), God had given them strength. And that was when it dawned on Sanballat and his cohorts that their mockery had not succeeded in breaking the resolve and faith of Nehemiah and his people.

A new strategy of opposition therefore had to be adopted. This time they would fight Nehemiah and try to create trouble for him (vs. 7-8).

Again, Nehemiah turned to God in prayer for strength and “posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.” With the LORD on their side, they would not be intimidated into abandoning the project. And so as some built, others held swords and spears to provide security and defence—even the builders themselves had swords dangling from their sides, combat ready while building (vs. 10-18)!

The lesson: In time of war and opposition, let not our hands (as God’s people) be weakened but pray for divine strength (Neh. 6:9).

As God told the Jews during the rebuilding of the Temple, we should let our hands be strong in accomplishing God’s work to His own glory (Zech. 8:9, 13). It’s never by our might or power, as He had earlier told Zerubbabel, but by His Spirit (Zech. 4:6-7). Nonetheless, we need to strengthen our hands—as Zerubbabel was instructed—to complete the work (Zech. 2:8-9).

Through the prophet Haggai, the LORD urged Zerubbabel and his people:

“Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I [am] with you, saith the LORD of hosts” (Hag. 2:4 KJV).

How do we gain this strength? By committing ourselves to believing and obeying every word of God. In his farewell message to the leaders of Israel, Joshua told them *inter alia*: “Be ye therefore very courageous [strong] to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law” (Josh. 23:6).

Joshua had learnt by experience that we gain strength through faith and obedience. When he took over from Moses, the LORD promised him: “I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses” (Josh. 1:3). Only be strong to obey all the words of my law, and I will be with you wherever you will set your foot (vs. 7-9).

In analyzing the above scripture, we can clearly see that although God had already pledged whatever territory Joshua’s feet would touch to him, the promise would only come true if he was strong! And Joshua did become strong through faith and obedience, as indicated in this glowing account he gave of his stewardship:

“The LORD has driven out before you great and powerful nations; to this day no one has been able to withstand you.

“One [Israelite] routs a thousand, because the LORD your God fights for you, just as He promised. So be very careful to love the LORD your God” (Josh. 23:9-11 NIV).

Brethren, if we will be victorious or have breakthroughs, we must be strong. It is only when we are strong in the faith, word and power of God can we be victors, but we will fall down if our strength is small (Prov. 24:10).

So let's strengthen the weak hands and be strong; deliverance comes from Strength—God's power at work in our lives (Isai. 35:3-7).

The text reads:

"Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way;

"Say to those with fearful hearts, 'Be strong, do not fear; your God will come with vengeance; with divine retribution He will come to save you.

"Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped.

"Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.

"The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow." (NIV).

'Then will ...' Here is a clear case of cause and effect. Because Strength has come, salvation too has come! When we are strong, victory cannot keep back, neither deliverance nor prosperity.

In his powerful peroration in the book of Ephesians, the apostle Paul writes:

"Finally, my brethren, BE STRONG IN THE LORD, and in the power of His might.

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:10-11 KJV).

'Iron sharpens iron', and kind attracts kind (Prov. 27:17). When we strengthen ourselves in the Strength (Power) of Christ, there is no way we will be weak or vulnerable.

So let us be strong in the LORD through enduring faith and a life of obedience and prayer. Christ, the Strength of our life, will strengthen us to do all things to His glory (Ps 27:1; Philippians 4:13). HalleluYah!

Contact

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Pastor Enoch Ofori Jnr

P.O. Box RP 141 Chirapatre, Kumasi Ashanti

+233 322095507/+233 24 423 5015

info@asdpagh.com | www.asdpagh.com