

Strength maintained and thanked for (Quality: Good, Quiet)

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Preacher: Collier, Gilbert (1900-1984)

[0 : 00] The End The End The End

As I was in the day that Moses sent me. As my strength was then, even so is my strength now for war both to go out and to come in.

The 14th chapter of Joshua, verse 11. These words that came from the lips of Caleb, the servant of the Lord, on his birthday, seem to be strikingly applicable to the occasion which we meet together here this morning.

The house of the Lord. The new year being but a few hours old. With all the prospects that may lie before us.

We recognize that one day and another have very little difference.

[2 : 53] But when we come to a time like this, when such a change is made from one year to another, we are bound naturally to think of the year that has gone and also of the year that lies before us.

It is quite reasonable and also profitable that it should be so.

Because we need to reflect much upon the way that the Lord has brought us. And in this verse that we have chosen this morning as a text, we see how this man, this man of faith and courage and strength, how he acknowledges the goodness of the goodness of the Lord to him personally.

There are three things in this text which seem to be so suitable as we consider the prospect of another year lying before us.

First of all, we find here this man acknowledges the Lord's goodness of the Lord. He says, I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me.

[4 : 53] Secondly, he recognizes from whence that strength comes, ever has come and ever will come.

And the third thing that he brings out in this word is the response.

The response of his own heart and mind as a recipient of the blessings and the help in the past that the Lord has afforded to him.

I think that those three things, on an occasion like this, have a telling importance about them.

We do indeed need to acknowledge the Lord's goodness to us as a people and also as individuals.

[6 : 09] To let these things pass by without a real acknowledgement of God's favor and mercy is very unworthy.

At least we can and should acknowledge that the Lord has spared our lives, brought us through.

Some of us may look back to see the circumstances through which the Lord has brought us safely and delivered us from what might have been.

Some of us may be tragic in our experience. Some of us may be tragic in our experience. And there's nothing that is more important than that, especially those that fear the Lord, and no of his preciousness and his grace should acknowledge gratefully and heartily the Lord's goodness.

Coupled with that, it's an important thing indeed to recognize, not to misjudge or miscalculate the source of our strength.

[7 : 43] People may think that they have been very fortunate, as they say, they use the word, to get through another year.

They attribute a great deal of that success to their own skill or wisdom. But a believer recognizes that what they have experienced has been by the goodness of the Lord.

They recognize that the strength that they have received has come day by day from the Lord.

And in the recognition of this, there's a call and a claim laid upon the heart and conscience to go forth in response to the Lord's bidding and in pursuit of the Lord's honor and glory.

Now, these three things were undoubtedly uppermost in the heart and mind of the Lord's servant, Caleb.

[9 : 15] There's something very striking and wonderful about this man, his strength. There was something very wonderful about this man, his strength.

There was something wonderful about the continuity of his strength, which he says, he recognizes. He says, I am as strong this day as the day when the Lord's servant sent me.

That was 40 years previously. What he says, therefore, here in this word is that for 40 long years, and they were not easy years, they were years largely spent in the wilderness, in the journeys, in the ups and downs of a wilderness life and journey.

But he says, I am as strong today as I was when I was first entered into this life and upon this journey.

That means that there was a continuity of his strength. Now, that's something that a believer can recognize and acknowledge.

[10 : 42] the continuity of the strength that they need to endure, to continue to live, to overcome, and to maintain the life of faith and the service of God.

The great apostle Paul, he acknowledges the same thing when he said, having obtained help from God, we continue to this day.

I would like to lay great emphasis upon the continuity of the strength that God supplies to his people.

Because as we come to the threshold of another year and think of the prospects before us, the duties that will fall to our lot, we may well sometimes be ready to faint and to fear that we shall not be sufficient or strong enough to maintain or to continue in honor and rectitude in the path that lies before us.

but this is a very precious fact that is present wherever the Lord places his grace.

[12 : 32] That is the continuity of his strength. As thy days so shall thy strength be.

It's a promise which is wonderfully and blessedly fulfilled in every individual experience.

And surely there will be those here this morning who readily and heartily acknowledge with Caleb that they are as strong today as when the Lord first called them and began to work in their hearts and minds to do his will and to seek his glory.

I am a strong this is not just a boast you know this is a very gracious recognition of the Lord's faithfulness and his sufficiency.

And as I said just now he begins this word with a word as yet as yet when you think of those words those two words and what lies behind them as yet all that had gone before all that he had been brought through and he was not an easy path for this poor dear man Caleb.

[14 : 22] You have to remember this that all his contemporaries had passed away that there was none around him that were over the age of 40 years.

He had seen therefore his friends and companions those with whom he had been brought up with from his earliest youth he had seen them all depart this life one after another because as you remember when God sent him and twelve and eleven others with him to spy out the land of Canaan and they went throughout that land of Canaan and brought back tidings about the nature of it ten of those twelve spies brought an evil report and in order no doubt to save their own skin influenced the people's minds of children of Israel against going forth to conquer the land that God had promised to give to them two men out of that little company were faithful they gave a real report they gave a true one and they strove hard to influence the people to go forward and to obtain what God had promised to give to them and remember how the anger of the Lord

God was upon the people of Israel who did not believe in the promises of God and were faint-hearted and feared the obstacles that were in their way and refused to go forward God said this generation that came out of the land of Egypt shall not go into the land of promise but forty years shall they wander in the wilderness until they all be taken away from this world save two men who were faithful to the Lord and faithful to his people Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun and that means of course that these two men had to stand alone it means that all their contemporaries all their friends and relatives of the same age as themselves departed they saw them one by one depart from this world and they were alone with a new generation around them and this is the birthday of this man

Caleb and he comes to Joshua with this word he says I am as strong this day as the day when Moses sent me but then secondly he acknowledges he does not claim anything to himself for the strength the endurance the continuity he recognizes that this great favor came from God he says my strength as my strength was then even so is my strength now that is to say it came from the same source it's the same strength and it comes from the same source so not only is continuity here but the originality of the strength of this man is recognized and acknowledged it was he recognized that God was the source of his strength what a wonderful thing it is when people come to realize that if they have any strength it does not come from themselves but from the Lord and when a person recognizes that simple fact they look to the

Lord for renewing of their strength and they look to the Lord day by day we prove very easily and swiftly what weak creatures we are how a little can disturb us and overturn us and show us our utter weakness in the face of opposition and adversity but when we come to realize this that our strength comes from the Lord we have a secret that is a wonderful secret indeed Paul found this to be a wonderful thing in his life he says we continue to this day because we have obtained help from God and another thing he said this

[21 : 03] I glory in his firmness because the power of Christ rested upon me and his strength is made perfect in my weakness there will be nothing more pleasing or beneficial to you throughout this coming year than a true recognition of where your strength comes from who supplies it where you may find it one of the poets I think it's Mr.

Hart he says I have known the day when with a single word God helping me to say my strength is in the Lord my soul has quelled a thousand foes fearless of all that did oppose and perhaps you've had something like the same experience in the year that is now past when those moments came into your life which were so full of travail and fearfulness and solemn uncertainty you found there was strength at that moment that came to you from not within but from beyond from above from the

Lord himself either by a word of support or of help or by a strange wonderful sense of his presence or of the sensation which is not a fleshly one but a very wonderfully spiritual one of his touch communicated to your conscience and heart these things produce the greatest strength they produce sufficiency of strength to endure and to continue so he says I am as strong this day is the day when the Lord the Lord's servant sent me as I was then so am I now you know there's only one people that can really lay claim to this declaration there's only one people that can experience the wonderful reality of constant support and help in every time of need and that is the people of

God those to whom the gospel has come and the power of God has been planted within whose eyes have been opened whose hearts have been made dependent upon the Lord for help and grace and strength such people know and only they know what reality there is in the continual strengthening the supply of strength for the needs of everyone every time of need I am as strong as it was my strength was then so is my strength now why if it were not so we might well look at the coming year with despair and anxiety and fear but we believe this that our

God is faithful to his promises we believe this that the Lord Jesus Christ when he spoke to his people and said to them I am with you even under the end meant fully exactly what he says and is with his people he will not leave them nor let them go but he will give them sufficiency of strength to meet their needs and to overcome their difficulties and it's a wonderful thing indeed that this man could say as my strength was then so is my strength now forty long years have gone past in the interval of time natural strength undoubtedly had declined he was eighty five years old when he uttered these words he had passed the allotted span of life and a good many people would have written him off as a has-been and one that no longer had any likelihood of useful service but he says I am as strong today as

[27 : 36] I was when Moses sent me it's not years it's not human strength that counts it's not weaknesses that are the great impediment it's God's strength and let us lay that much in our hearts it's his constant presence and provision this is the great secret of the strength of every believer and the continuation of that strength does not depend upon their ability to make use of it it depends upon God's mercy and grace in giving then the third thing that we have here he says this strength is for a purpose he could see a purpose in it it was for war a great many people will retire when they come to an age and leave it for other people to do the hard tasks and bear the heavy burdens but here's a man and I want us to look at him as an example because he's a wonderful example in the scriptures here's a man who is 85 and he's contemplating further exploits in the name of the Lord he is ready he's embracing himself for new tasks to undertake and new campaigns to enter into he says my strength is the same and this is the reason for it this is an obligation that seems to rest upon my spirit now because as the Lord has made his strength known to me so constantly and wonderfully it's for a purpose not for me to retire and hang as it were my hearts on the willows it's now for me to go forward to engage in the conflicts that are so necessary for the honours of the Lord it's for war both to go out and to come in to go out tonight he was ready to go out in the warfare of faith in the fight and conflict for the honours of the Lord and the service of his

God and that's a wonderful fact isn't it I would that we might address ourselves to this new year in the same spirit let us not be seeking some further opportunity of relief from our duties or an easier pathway for us to follow let us rather seek in the same spirit that Caleb sought at the 86th year of his life on his very birthday let us seek new openings for the service of the Lord new spirit in our own hearts to address ourselves faithfully to his honour and his glory to maintain more constantly the battle against evil unholy things self and all the attendant evils to go out to go out to battle you could also see that in the accomplishment of this aim there would be a coming in coming in again with the fruits and spoils of victory in other words here was a warrior that could see before him the opportunities that he was determined to seize because he knew this that in the past

God had given him strength to continue to overcome and in the future he would undoubtedly continue to meet his every need and when we know that God has met our needs supported us in the path we have trodden it's incumbent that we should seek with all earnestness to follow him to wage the warfare that he calls us to to rally around the banner of truth and to fight the great fight of faith so let us remember these things these three things in our text the strength that

Caleb recognized acknowledged as from the Lord his God so needful for his daily walk his daily life and also let us recognize that our future way as believers as those who are committed unto the Lord and to his cause the future is one which ever opens the opportunity of conflict of waging a good warfare of standing fast and firm for the truth of God and of entering into that way of life which is for the glory of

Christ may he grant us strength continued strength to do it amen can for an ■ Welcome to history■ 332 Now let the people all be strong and make Jehovah's arms their song.

[35 : 48] His shield is spread o'er every saint and thus support it through the shell frame. 332 Am I thy son?

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.