

Articles and Sermons :: Secret of Spiritual Strength by Zac Poonen**Secret of Spiritual Strength by Zac Poonen - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2008/7/21 22:31****Secret of Spiritual Strength***by Zac Poonen*

When God delivered the Israelites out of Egypt. He had marked out a route for them to travel in the wilderness on their way to Canaan. They however could know it only as they followed the pillar of cloud and fire, day by day. For each of His redeemed children today, God has a pathway marked out too. But they can know it only as they walk with Him each day. If we are to fully lay hold of the purpose for which God has laid hold of us, we must learn to walk with God. And here is where we shall find resistance from Satan at every step. Even as thieves invade the homes of the rich more than of the poor, Satan aims his darts more at the believer who is spiritually minded than at the one who is carnally minded. We shall therefore find the battle getting thicker with every step of progress in spiritual maturity.

There are many forces that seek to hinder the believer who would press on to do all of God's will: the world with its varied attractions, the flesh with its unclean lusts, and the Devil with his subtle devices. If these are hindrances to the believer's spiritual growth, we may wonder why God does not eliminate them, or at least protect the believer from them. This has been a problem that has plagued many minds down the centuries. Sufficient here for us to know that it is our heavenly Father, who is wiser than all of us, who has permitted these forces to exist. One good reason at least may be in order that our spiritual strength may be built up. Even in the physical realm, our muscles can be built up only as we subject them to resistance through exercise. Otherwise our muscles will be flabby and powerless. A wrestler who is training for a bout will need constant exercise, wrestling with others in order to fit himself for the event. In the same way our spiritual strength can never be developed if we are protected from the trials and temptations of the world, the flesh and the Devil.

It should bring us strong consolation to know however that the Lord Jesus was Himself tempted with every single temptation that comes to us (Heb. 4:15). Luke tells us that Jesus went into the wilderness, "full of the Holy Spirit," and that at the end of the temptation, He returned "in the power of the Spirit" (4:1, 14). Overcoming the temptations common to man had strengthened even Him, as a man. Can it not do the same for us? Let us never imagine that we can become spiritually strong just by reading Christian books and attending religious meetings. Such activities are the equivalent of taking food, but along with our food we need exercise too if we are to be strong. That is why those who cut themselves off from contact with the people of the world and live protected Christian lives never become spiritually robust.

Holiness is like health. To be fully healthy, we need to take regular exercise. Then only can we resist disease. Thus to be made perfect, we have to go through temptation and overcome it. If we evade testing, we can never be made perfect. This suggests another reason why God placed the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. It gave Adam the opportunity to overcome temptation and to become positively holy. There is no need for us to fear temptation. The Lord has assured us in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that He will never allow us to be tempted above our ability to bear it.

Psalm 66:10-12 is one of those wonderful Old Testament passages that suggest what tremendous benefits can come to us through trial and testing. The fire and the water make us not only spiritually wealthy but spiritually healthy too. The men of God in the Bible were all subject to the same temptations that plague us. James 5:17 tells us that even Elijah had the same lusts and passions to overcome as we have. It was because these men of God overcame in their trials and testings, that they became strong, and thus usable in God's hands. God permits temptation to come to us in order to test us. Everyone who would be used by God must be tested. The temptations that come to us when we are alone are meant to prove our fitness for more public service. Overcoming temptation is like learning to swim. You cannot learn to swim in one day. But if you are determined, you will sooner or later acquire the skill. Then you are no longer afraid of the water. In just the same way, if we are determined, we shall learn the secret in Christ of victory over temptation, and then of that too we shall no longer be afraid.