

Prestonwood Connection

Living In The Shadow Of The Almighty #10

Strength

Psalm 86

Wednesday, October 29, 2003 • Dr. David McKinley

[Dr. McKinley, message *Strength In The Shadow Of The Almighty*] <276>

Lord, tonight we thank You for the truth of that song and the ministry of it to our hearts and I do pray that tonight that we would prove your strength as we gather in this place. I pray that as a result of worshipping You through song, of praying and seeking You in earnest, of hearing Your word that we would be strengthened a..., to live for Christ and I pray Father that what happens here tonight would strengthen us and strengthen this church, this body for the mission and the ministry of it's outreach this coming weekend and in the days ahead and so Lord we give You thanks tonight for the promise of Your strength and for the privilege of prayer in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

I'm so glad you're here tonight. It's great to see you, great to be together here on this Wednesday evening and always grateful to come together and to have the opportunity to pray. A..., prayer can be described in many different ways. It can be experienced a..., at all times in life, but I'm curious tonight how many of you have ever prayed that simple, one word prayer, that says, "HELP?" [pause for congregation laughter] Have you ever done that? Have you ever come to a place in your life, I wanna be sure you're awake, I wanna be sure you're with me here tonight [more laughter] and a..., have you ever just had that moment in life where the only thing you could think to say and yet you said it with every inch, every nerve and fiber from the inside out, "God help me!" Have you ever prayed that prayer? Would you let me know tonight? That's good. That looks like a unanimous a..., crowd here and I'm thankful to know that, because a..., as I asked you that question tonight it means that we're all in good company. It's a prayer that we know. It's a prayer that we understand. It's a prayer that we've prayed. But I want you know that it's also a prayer that we find in the Bible and tonight if you'll take your Bible and open it to Psalm 86, you'll find that Psalm 86 is in reality a prayer. It is the heart of the psalmist calling out to the Lord in his hour of need and he is calling out to God for help. And so I want you to turn with me to Psalm 86 and I want us to begin reading in verse 1 and read the opening a..., portion of this Psalm and then just make our way through this prayer tonight so that we can learn and that we can engage God's strength at whatever point of need, whatever point of concern or crisis we may have as we gather in this place tonight. Psalm 86 verse 1 says:

¹*Bow down Your ear, O LORD, and hear me; For I am poor and...*

What's the next word?

...needy.

I need Thee every hour.

²*Preserve my life, for I am holy; You are my God; Save Your servant who trusts in You!* ³*Be merciful to me, O Lord, For I cry to You all day long.*

⁴*Rejoice the soul of Your servant, For to You, O Lord, I lift up my soul.*

Literally he's just sayin, "God, help!" And then look down in verse 16:

Oh, turn to me, and have mercy on me! Give Your strength to Your servant, And save the son of Your maidservant.

I love the way that it's presented in The Message, where it says:

So look to me, or that is, so look me in the eye and show kindness. Give Your servant the strength to go on. Save Your dear child.

God save me! God help me! I think there's an incredible statement of fact, and an incredible point of identification that we begin with as we open the words of this Psalm tonight and that is simply this, that we need God's strength, because, strength is needed by God's children. We are His children, but we are a needy bunch. Right Rick? We are. You needed a little help just a minute ago didn't you? Huh? Two heads are better than one right? An open rebuke is better than secret love, right? [pause for congregation laughter] Anyway, so, we...we have needs, and we all have a need in life, not just for the help that comes from friends on the outside, but we need the help of God in life and one of the most important things that we can come to terms with, every single one of us, is that we need to resign as the general managers of the universe and come face to face with the reality, every single morning, I need help! And the more that we are willing to admit it, the more that we are willing to recognize it and ultimately to seek it, we begin to come to the place in life where we can experience God's strength at the point of our weakness. You see we need strength because we are so limited. We simply run to the end of our resources. We do all that we can to try to live a full life and to be complete and responsible and to be active and all these different things, but the reality of life is that every single one of us in this room, not only has strengths and abilities and resources, every one of us has limitations. And it's coming to terms with the reality of that limitation and of the need that is represented through that limitation that we come to the place that we can begin to experience God's strength. The bottom line is, we get weary, weary and there's nothing wrong with being weary. There is something significantly wrong with throwing in the towel. You're gonna get weary, I'm going to get weary and weariness is a common life experience because of the limitations that every one of us faces in life.

But when we're weary we need His strength. Now, what are the things that make us weary in life? Well I've just brought an assortment of thoughts tonight and you can add to this list yourself, I, I think that for most of us in this room one of the things that a **CAUSE OF WEARINESS** is...

CRITICISM, when you feel like constantly someone is saying something about you, somebody's always on you, you're constantly being ridden. You're always being told what you didn't do not what you did do and instead of honoring your efforts you're always being brought to the mat at the point of your smallest fault and criticism is a cause of weariness in life.

For many of us **RESPONSIBILITY**'s a cause of weariness. Some of you are here tonight and you are tired and the reason that you are tired is that you have put in a hard day at work. You've tried to be responsible. You've tried to get up, get there on time, fight the traffic to get to the office, do your job, make all the calls you could, respond to all the e-mails that you could, get in a car, drive back here tonight. I mean, this is a pretty good display of responsibility in your life. Spiritually you're being responsible. You're saying I need some growth and I need some help, but, but you get tired in responsibility.

We get tired because of **RESISTANCE**. We're all involved in the spiritual battle and facing a spiritual warfare and the constant e...edge of conflict and the constant place of resistance that we face in life a..., brings us to the place of weariness.

And then **DISCIPLINE**. Discipline, the disciplines of prayer, the discipline of worship, the discipline of Bible study a..., the discipline that we mentioned in responsibility, just the general disciplines of life and especially spiritual disciplines can be the cause of weariness. Many people begin to a..., feel as though they're failing God when they begin to loose step sometimes in their disciplines and sometimes it's because they've begun to assume that their discipline is the basis of God's approval of them and that's a very sad thing when that happens. I talk to Christians all the time who are saying to me, help me here I, I'm not doing as much as I need to do and how wonderful it is to come to terms once again with the magnificent grace of God and it's not about us it's about Him and what He's done for us and yet discipline is important and disciplines are necessary and spiritual disciplines are a part of life.

DEPENDENCE, do you ever get tired of being dependent? Do you ever just wanna throw off all the points of dependence of life and say God, I just wanna be independent? And sometimes because we feel dependent we become weary.

And **SICKNESS** can make us weary. Some of you in this room are battling sickness in your life, someone you love and someone who's near and dear to you in your family of friends and your circle of influence is a person who is sick and a person who is weary and it's so easy to get that way. I, I've been so impressed to see our beloved Jen Griffin as she was here Sunday in worship and then tonight and playing that wonderful violin as

she does so gracefully and yet as many of you know, just a few weeks ago, a couple of months ago we had a time of prayer for Jen because she's going through a time of cancer treatment and we trust God for recovery and strength but, you know you get tired in the midst of fighting battles of sickness in life.

And then just the weariness of **LIFE**. Do you ever just get tired of life? Heh, just get tired of life, you know? And weariness comes to us in life and every point of weariness is simply the reminder again that we are needy. We lose our spark. We lose our motivation. We lose our hope, we lose our optimism. We just lose heart and that's exactly where this psalmist is tonight. He was a man who was needy and he knew it and strength was needed in his life as a child of God and he literally said in verse 3:

...all day long.

Or better yet, all the time God, I am just calling out to You because I am exhausted, I'm discouraged and I need strength. We sang a beautiful hymn just a few minutes ago, *I Need Thee Every Hour*. But there's a hymn that dates all the way back to the 8th Century that simply says this:

*Art thou weary, art thou languid, art thou sore distressed?
Come to Me saith One, and coming be at rest.
Hath He marks to lead me to Him, if He be my guide?
In His hands and feet are wound prints and in His side.
Finding, following, keeping, struggling, is He sure to bless?
Saints, apostles, prophets, martyrs they all answer...*

What?

..., Yes!

Yes, **STRENGTH IS NEEDED** in your life and in my life. But there is a provision of strength and that testimony is the testimony of the saints of God through all the ages. And tonight I wanna encourage you by letting you know, that you may be here, you may be tired, you may be weary, you may be just tonight coming face to face with the fact that I need strength. Well, the promise of God is to provide it. And so that takes us from what I have tried to use as our starting point tonight, simply saying that strength is needed in the lives of God's children.

And I want you to see something else from this Psalm and that is simply this that **STRENGTH IS ROOTED** in the nature and the character of our God. Strength that you need and strength that I need is rooted in the very character of God Himself. Look beginning in verse 5:

⁵For You, LORD, are good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in mercy to all who call upon You. ⁶Give ear, O LORD to my prayer; And attend to the voice of my supplications. ⁷In the day of my trouble I will call upon You, For You will answer me. ⁸Among the gods there's none like You, O Lord; Nor are

there any works like Your works. ⁹All the nations whom You've made Shall come and worship before You, O Lord, And shall glorify Your name. ¹⁰For You are great, and do wondrous things; You alone are God.

The psalmist recognized not only his own need, but he recognized something about the wonder and about the character of God and he began to lift up his heart and life up his voice and to realized that the strength that he needed so desperately in his life was rooted in the very character of who God is and how God relates to us. Please don't get the idea that God is some kind of a great pharmacist in heaven, who every time I have a need and you have a need simply dispenses a prescription of strength and sends it down to us. God is not the dispenser of prescriptions of strength in my life, God does something better than that, God gives us Himself. And it is in knowing Him and experiencing Him and walking with Him and coming to know who God is and what God is like that I begin to experience the power of His strength. Strength isn't something God gives, strength is something God is and the more that you relate to Him and experience Him at the points of need in your life the more that you will reveal His strength at every point of need. Listen again to Psalm 86, verse 5:

For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in mercy to all who call upon You.

And then again in verse 15:

But You, LORD, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, and longsuffering, abundant in mercy and in truth.

It is God who is our strength, not something God gives, but He Himself is the very source of our strength and this is the distinctive issue of the faith of our God and Father in His Savior the Lord Jesus Christ.

This past weekend *USA Today* carried an article, one of those little boxes on the front of *USA Today* that simply said:

*Majority think of God as a spirit or power.
Majority think of God as a spirit ~~of power~~ or power.*

And then the, the a..., graphic that's here, it just simply says.

How do people think of God?

Well, for 48% they said that He's a spirit or a power that can take on human form; 27%, a spirit or a power that doesn't take on human form, that He's just some sort of a, a emanation that's out there, the force be with you. And then there were 10% who said they just don't even believe in God and 9% who said a human being with a body and other just sort of, I don't know what I think about any of that, 5%. You see people are very quick to adapt and to embrace and to profess the idea that God is some cosmic force in heaven. They are comfortable with the idea of His Spirit and His power the cause behind all causes and in fact the Bible tells us that God is

Spirit. Jesus Himself says, that: [John 4:24]

"God is Spirit and they who worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth."

But if all you know of God is that He is a spiritual being or that He is a powerful being you have not come to the full understanding of what the Bible teaches about the reality of the God that we worship. Because, not only is He spirit and power, He is person and personality and He knows you and He cares about you and He has chosen to relate Himself to you. That is the distinctive of the Christian faith. That's why we don't just embrace any and every idea about a god who's a power, a force or just a spirit. He is a God you can know. He is a God you can trust. He is a God you can experience and the ultimate display of the character of God was when God became a man in the person of Jesus Christ, became one of us, identified with us, died on the cross for our sins, faced death and defeated death, rose again and has now given us the wonderful hope of eternal life through Jesus Christ. Strength is rooted in God's character and when we talk about the strength that we need in life we're not simply talking about a god who's just out there somewhere who maybe can throw a little bit of His spirit and a little bit of His power our direction, but a God who is active and moving and working in our lives and therefore it is in my relationship with God that I experience the strength of God in my life. I go back to the Psalm that we discussed last week, Psalm 103 and verse ~~am7~~ 6, **[should be 14]** it says:

...He knows our frame; and is mindful that we are but dust.

God knows what we're like, and because He knows us and knows our need for strength, He has chosen to relate to us in such a personal and in such a specific way that we can know and experience His strength at every point of need in life. He's a God you can worship for His power and glory, but He is a God that you can know in His strength and His activity in your life.

Last Wednesday evening I finished teaching and sharing in this service and as I began to make my way to the door, I got right over to this aisle here and I had a, a young woman come up and introduce herself to me, it was the first time she'd ever been to a Connection service and she shared with me some things that were going on in her life and some hardships that she and her family were facing. She related to me the fact that her sister who lived in a state up in a..., Michigan or Wisconsin I'm actually, I'm not absolutely clear at this moment in my mind, I can't remember, but she mentioned to me that she lived somewhere up in that area and that she had, her sister had died just a few days earlier. She was sharing with me how much she needed the service and the ministry of the service and how badly she wanted to go north, but that she did not have the resources that she needed to do that. She asked me if I knew of any particular type of transportation that could possibly help or, or had any ideas or suggestions. And so I took her name and talked with her and promised her that I would get her in touch with our city missions office, with Steve

Byrd, who often helps people in need and who are dealing with a variety of financial needs. I talked with her a few minutes, I prayed with her. She left. There was an attorney who works downtown in the city of Dallas who makes his way out here on Wednesday evenings. He'd come over to ask me a couple of questions and was standing just a few feet back. He came up to me afterwards and he said, a..., did I hear something about a need for a..., a trip and I said, yes and we're gonna try to work with that and deal with it...and he said, well you know I have a whole lot of frequent flyer miles and he said, I just want you to know if you need em here's my card, take it and we can do that. I forwarded that information to Steve Byrd. Two days later the connection was made. Steve Byrd connected the two of them and as only the Lord would have it this attorney had come to know her brother in that state when he worked there a number of years ago and immediately knew this family and took those miles and sent this woman and her children to that funeral this last Saturday. Now why does that happen. Is it coincidence? No, there is a God whose very character and nature is to know everything about what you need tonight and He will never forget you, He will never forsake you. I'm not saying He's gonna always give you frequent flyer miles, okay? [pause for congregation laughter] But I want you to know there's not any place any time, any moment in your life where God will not meet you at that point of need, because His very character is to give strength to His children. So strength is needed by God's children. Strength is rooted in God's character.

There's another thing that I want you to see from Psalm 86 tonight and that is that **STRENGTH IS DISCOVERED** in God's will. How can I know God's strength in my life? Well, look at what it goes on to say here, after it says in verse 10 a...:

You are great and do wondrous things; You alone are God.

And then it says in verse 11, listen to this prayer of the psalmist.

¹¹Teach me Your way, O Lord; I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name. ¹²I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, And I will glorify Your name forevermore.

The psalmist is saying here, God I have a great need and God I know that You're the supplier. But God I wanna make it absolutely clear, I want to do Your will.

Teach me your way O Lord;...; Unite my heart to fear Your name...

And the greatest way that you can know the strength of God in your life and that I can know it is simply by maintaining a spirit of submission, surrender and obedience to His will. Whenever you're walking in the will of God you will never lack His strength and what God is wanting in you and God is wanting in me is a heart that says, whether I like the circumstance or not, whether I like the atmosphere of not, whether I like the benefits or not, God I wanna be true to Your will in my life. And so whether it's the to fly or whether it's to take the seas, or the rail or whatever

journey you wanna take... < **TURN TAPE** > Lord I'm willing to go cause I wanna do Your will. You see there's a consequence to going it alone in life. There's a consequence to wanting to just do your own thing and I can promise you that the greatest consequence in life is a lack of strength. I believe that the reason so many believers have no strength is because so many of us are just not walking in the will of God. The reason so many churches have no strength is because they're not on mission with God, they're caught up in a bunch of little squabbles and fights and spats. All of em have a lot of "I" trouble, you know, not this kind, but just I, I, I and the reality is, is that when we are self focused and self conscious and self driven, we will lose our strength.

True or false? God helps those who help himself? Hum? Well, lets not answer that so quickly. I'm tempted to ask you how many of you think that's in the Bible cause I have people all the time come up and say, now doesn't it say somewhere in the Bible, God helps those who help themselves? Can I give you the answer? False! The Bible doesn't say God helps those who help themselves. The Bible says God helps those who honor His will and if you wanna know the strength of God in your life then the secret to that is honoring His will. Now, I never feel good about getting into this subject that I don't pause and ask the question: How do I know the will of God? I know that comes up every single time. People say, how do I know the will of God in my life? And while this is not a message on the will of God, let me just be sure that based on what the psalmist prayed that I remind you again the way that you know and experience **GOD'S WILL**. Three simple steps:

Number 1: **PURPOSE** to do the will of God in your heart. God will make His will known to anybody who says God I wanna do Your will. What I mean by that is purpose to do it before you know what it is. I love the fact that he prays here and says:

Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth;...

He doesn't say, Lord give me the options and let me see which one I like. God's will's not a cafeteria line where you go through and say, well I like this and I don't like that. No, you just simply say, God whatever it is I purpose to do Your will in my heart. That's where you begin knowing the will of God. It's by purposing to do the will of God in your heart.

Secondly: You must **PURSUE** the will of God from your heart. Pursue it! It is something to be pursued in life. The Bible tells us in the book of Romans chapter 12 that we are to give ourselves holy to God and that ultimately: [verse 2]

...we will prove that good acceptable and perfect will of God.

It is something you pursue. It's not sort of a laze fare sort of a queue sera, sera, it is a diligent pursuit of the will of God. God I wanna know Your will, I'm going to do Your will and it is an intentional issue in my heart. Every morning when I come to consciousness out of my sleep I try to

say, Lord today, today I wanna do Your will, I just wanna pursue Your will in all areas of my life.

And then number 3: **PROVE** the will of God in real time. Prove the re...will of God in real time today. Here's a very important secret that my pastor Dr. Adrian Rogers taught me when I was a teenager. He said this, he said:

"If you want to live in the will of God in the next 15 years, then do the will of God the next 15 minutes."

The problem with us in the will of God is I like the idea of it being out there on a big story board and I say that's the will of God, that's where I'm going, that's what I'm doing. That's not how the will of God unfolds in your life. You see when you purpose to do the will of God and then you begin to pursue the will of God and then you practice the will of God right now what you know to be the will of God in the next 15 minutes of your life, you can begin to string a habit forming pattern in life where you live in the will of God. I can't promise all the things I'm gonna do tomorrow. I don't know all of what God's gonna do in my life. I learned a long time ago to quit tryin to write the script. I spent so many years tryin to write the script. God finally said, why don't you let Me just write the script and you just do your part. And my part is to do the will of God in the next 15 minutes in my life, to follow Him, to purpose, to pursue and to prove His will in my life today. Strength, it's needed by God's children. Strength, it's rooted in God's character. Strength, it's discovered in God's will.

One other thing, **STRENGTH, IT'S SUPPLIED** for God's glory. It's supplied for God's glory. Lets go again here to verse 16:

¹⁶Oh, turn to me, and have mercy on me! Give Your strength to Your servant. And save the son of your maidservant. ¹⁷Show me a sign for good, That those who hate me may see it and be ashamed. Because You LORD, have helped and comforted me.

Go back, if you will to verse 12:

I will praise You, O LORD my God, with all my heart, I will glorify Your name forever.

I love this phrase that a..., we've just read back there in verse 17,

...Show me a sign for good...

Now there's several ways in which we can look at that. A..., one way that I can look at that is, you know, God give me a sign. Heh! Give me a sign, you ever pray like that? God give me a sign. But I really believe when the psalmist was praying, Lord, show me a sign for good, he was saying, Lord, let my life be a sign of Your goodness. Let my life be, as though it were, a fl...flashing signal of who you are and what your like and what others see of You working in me. You see that is seeking His strength that would be

supplied for His glory. God is not interested in giving you or me His strength so that we can run around being a bunch of little spiritually mighty men and mighty women. God wants us to have His strength so that we can display His glory in our lives.

Someone asked a woman what's it like to be a Christian? And she simply looked at that woman who asked her, a coworker there in the office and said,

"Well frankly being a Christian is like being a pumpkin."

Heh!

"God picks you from the patch. He brings you in. He washes all the dirt off of you. He cuts off the top and scoops all the yuck out of the inside. He removes the seeds of doubt, hate, greed and then He carves in to you a new smiling face and He puts His light inside of you to shine for the entire world to see."

That's the Christian life. That's not the pumpkin life, that's the Christian life. [pause for slight congregation laughter] And you know how I know that? Because over in the book of 2nd Corinthians Paul said: [4:7]

But this precious treasure, this light and power that now shined within us is held in perishable containers.

That is, in our weak bodies.

So everyone can see that glorious power is from God and is not our own.

God gives you strength for His glory. And God wants you to experience His strength because God wants you to prove His glory in your life. Do you think it's any wonder that when Jesus taught us the model prayer, that He taught us specifically how to pray? Jesus didn't teach us just to pray, "HELP." He said:

"When you pray, pray in ~~these~~...this way: Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven..."

Well, what did He mean by that?

"...Thy name..."

Lord, we want Your name to be magnified in every area of our lives.

"...Thy kingdom..."

Lord, I want my life to be about extending Your kingdom and fulfilling Your mission.

"...Thy will..."

Lord, could Your will be accomplished in my life? It's one of the greatest things you can pray.

"...Thy name be magnified..."

"...Thy kingdom be extended..."

"...Thy will be accomplished..."

Strength for the glory of God.

I know that there are people in this room tonight who need strength. Now, I want you to know tonight that the greatest display of God's strength is what He did in the person of Jesus Christ, when Jesus left heaven and came to earth, when He became one of us, when He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin, when He faced shame and suffering and separation. Why did He do all of that? So that He could be your substitute and God's perfect sacrifice and so that all that sin had destroyed and guilt and condem...condemnation had brought upon us may be put away and that we could experience God's strength and God's life, the gift of eternal life.