



Connecting With God For a Strong Finish

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CHAPTER 4 Strength to Live

Life is not hard to live—It's Impossible!
Without God's Help

Connecting with Jesus Christ enables us to live more abundantly, love more passionately, and influence more effectively. He seasons our personality with peace and flavors it with joy. He fuels our performance with perseverance and sustains it with patience. Life on earth offers more than a survival course for us to negotiate. It summons us with an eternal priority enriched with a relational agenda. Knowing the truth about God empowers us to embrace His glory and encounter His goodness.

*His divine power has given us **everything we need for life** and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.*

(2 Peter 1:3 NIV)

Strength for the Busy Life

Naturally we need strength to live, especially when life gangs up on us in a torrent of activities. Our biological frame depends on strength and our emotional physique demands it. Strength is fundamental to our existence. A dead person lacks energy and commands no power in the flesh.

Strength for the Boring Life

Life is not always rigorous and challenging. Sometimes tedium and boredom dominate our schedule. More often than not, repetitive trifles occupy center stage. Day after day, week after week, monotonous moments blend together in a mundane blur.

Spinning our wheels in the rut of lifeless living can drain our strength and deplete our enthusiasm. Unless we engage Jesus Christ in a dynamic connection, emptiness steals the show. Collaborating with Him transforms redundant tasks into

rewarding accomplishments. Serving with Him in a vibrant community adds meaning to our efforts and significance to our struggles.

Strength for the Burned-Out Life

During Hezekiah's reign, Sennacherib's army besieged the walls of Jerusalem while an Assyrian orator besieged the courage of its occupants. Using obstetric terminology associated with childbearing, Hezekiah's leadership team summed up the situation. They told the king:

*"This day is a day of distress, rebuke, and rejection; for children have come to birth, and **there is no strength to deliver.**"* (2 Kin 19:3 NAS)

The word *effete* means utterly exhausted. It comes from the Latin term *ef-fetus*, which means worn-out from childbearing.¹ Sennacherib's military threat caused pregnant mothers to become *effete* before giving birth.

As Sennacherib's army turned cities into rubble, the Israeli survivors:

*were **short of strength**, they were **dismayed and put to shame**; They were as the vegetation of the field and as the green herb, as grass on the housetops is **scorched** before it is grown up.* (2 Kings 19:26 NAS ; also see Isaiah 37:27)

This Assyrian crisis generated widespread burnout and premature 'enscorchment'. After King Hezekiah flung himself in God's direction, the prophet Isaiah proclaimed the word of the Lord. This prophecy generated strength, inspired courage, and conveyed comfort for those who believed it. Isaiah prophesied:

"By the way that he [Sennacherib] came, by the same he shall return, and he shall not come into this city, declares the LORD." (2 Kings 19:33 ESV)

The outcome of this annihilation threat favored Israel because:

that night the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. Then Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went home and lived at Nineveh. (2 Kings 19:35-36 ESV)

Burnout comes from prolonged stress due to mental, physical, emotional, and/or spiritual exhaustion.² Whether from busyness, boredom, or battle, everyone contends with burnout at one time or another. Waiting for the Lord poised in

¹ *The American Heritage Dictionary*, (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1983).

² Frank Minirth, Don Hawkins, Paul Meier, and Richard Flournoy, *How to Beat Burnout*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), p.14-15.

hopeful anticipation renews our strength. Hearing His voice directly or indirectly imparts strength, courage, and comfort.

Stars Burnout

When a star burns too much fuel it collapses. Depending on its mass, three outcomes may occur. Low-mass stars crush their own atoms and become white dwarfs about the size of Earth. High-mass stars collapse into black holes where intense gravity prevents light from escaping. Stars with a mass between these extremes collapse into neutron stars. They become so inwardly focused that escalating heat and density cause them to implode.³ Neutron stars compress a million times the mass of Earth into a sphere about ten miles across.⁴

Connecting with God for strength prevents us from burning out, i.e., from becoming a dense white dwarf, an invisible black hole, or a self-absorbed implosion.

Examples of Men who Burned-on

- Moses experienced a face-to-face connection with God. His ongoing relationship allowed him to burn-on for 120 years. When he died, ***“his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone.”***⁵
- **Caleb** endured severe bondage for 40 years. Emancipated from Egyptian slavery, he sojourned through the wilderness. There, he experienced bloody hand-to-hand combat and the emotional trauma that followed. Nonetheless, Caleb emerged as strong at 85 years of age as he was at 40. He used God’s strength to conquer and then inhabit the giant infested mountain of Hebron. Rather than burning out, Caleb burned on with ageless strength. He said:

I am eighty-five years old today. I am still as strong today as I was in the day Moses sent me; as my strength was then, so my strength is now, for war and for going out and coming in. (Joshua 14:10-11 NAS)

Like Moses and Caleb, we can follow the Holy Spirit where our own strength cannot take us—to overcome gigantic challenges. Our relationship with Christ offers extraordinary power and supernatural courage for struggles yet to come.

Acute and Chronic Fatigue

³ David Stern, Goddard Space Flight Center , 29 July 2003, <http://www-istp.gsfc.nasa.gov/stargaze/Sgloss.htm#q29B>

⁴ *Voyage Through the Universe—Stars*, Time-Life Books, inc., Alexandria, VA, 1988, p.123.

⁵ Deu 34:7 NIV

With or without warning, our body, mind, and emotions suffer from fatigue. *Acute fatigue* occurs with the sudden onset of exhaustion, loss of energy, and/or loss of strength. *Chronic fatigue* develops by repeatedly spending too much energy without sufficient rest, or by over exertion in an unfulfilling cause. It manifests as persistent weakness, relentless exhaustion, or ongoing weariness.

According to American Mythologist Joseph Campbell, “There is perhaps nothing worse than reaching the top of the ladder and discovering that you’re on the wrong wall”.

When we overexert ourselves, weariness, fatigue, and occasionally burnout occur. Like the disciples in the garden of Gethsemane, our natural strength tends to lag behind noble ambitions. We become vulnerable to the willing-spirit and weak-body syndrome. On the night before He was crucified, Jesus pleaded with Peter, James, and John to heed His advice. Jesus said,

*“Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; **the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.**”* (Matthew 26:41 NAS)

We Live by God’s Power

we are weak... yet by God's power we will live (2 Corinthians 13:4 NIV)

Jesus specializes in helping weak people. He infuses them with strength and inspires them with courage for a purpose. In Christ, weak people become strong servants because the Holy Spirit anoints them with power to live, love, and influence in a lost and dying world.

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