

WEEK THIRTEEN
DAY THREE

**Blessed are those whose strength is in you,
in whose heart are the highways to Zion.
Psalm 84:5**

How wonderful it is to live life nestled right up against our Father, carefully tucked securely under the Everlasting Arms. To me, that is what Psalm 84 is all about. Going through life as if we are two ice skaters whose every leaning and move is beautifully aligned so we gracefully glide over life's rough patches is an image that comes to mind when I think of living life on earth the way God intended.

Because we will be blessed when our strength is in Him. We know that. In our own lives, we have probably proven that time after time. Yielding to God's perfect will is always the shortest distance to peace and blessing. Bending our will to His always results in the release of pain and tension, and it is the beginning of our feelings healing and our circumstances changing.

So why do we resist? Why do we pull this way and that? Why do we hold back our acknowledgment of our own sin as we observe the sins of others? Why do we hold on to hurt feelings if we feel they are justified, even though we know holding on is a barrier between perfect synchrony with our Father?

Our strength is in Him. Our confidence is in Him. Letting go of sin and self is the first step toward gliding through life with the one who can smooth the path ahead and fix the falls and tumbles we all will take. Nothing is too difficult for Him, and if He is in it, nothing is too difficult for us through Him. Has HE asked you to serve Him in some way? Nothing is too difficult. Has He asked you to give up something dear to you? Nothing is too difficult. When you say, "I can't," remember that He can, and His strength is in you to do anything that is in His will.

And if you are that woman who sometimes goes beyond meekness to being insecure or timid, remember that it is not your strength that you are supposed to be operating in; it is His. Have you ever felt you lacked confidence? It is not your confidence you should be operating in when you walk into a room of strangers, take on a new job or task, stand up to heresy, or invite someone to church. Your confidence is in the Lord. If you are trying to do life in your own strength and confidence, you will never feel right, and you will soon wear yourself out.

Our hearts long for home, and Zion is home according to Jesus' heritage. We long to be at one with our precious Lord. We long to put down the effort to do life in our own strength and be under His protection so we can rest from our labors and enjoy Him as the family member He is. On earth, this is found by listening for his will, yielding our plan for the day to His, and following Him so closely we bend and move at his every touch.

One day, we will be home for good from our travels and assignments on earth. We will live in His house and feast at His table all day long for eternity. We will breathe a huge

sigh of relief as we enter our Heavenly home, kick off our traveling shoes, and never face a moment of opposition from our enemy again, because our enemy won't be there. Until then, we can reach for God's strength minute by minute, day by day, and live life not in our strength but in His.

~ Casey Hawley

WEEK THIRTEEN
DAY FOUR

**Blessed are those whose strength is in you,
in whose heart are the highways to Zion.
Psalm 84:5**

This second beatitude of Psalm 84 describes two conditions that lead to us being blessed by God.

First, we are blessed when our strength is in God, when we are surrendered and dependent, putting our full confidence in our Father in Heaven to deal with our life.

Second, we are blessed when our hearts are set on the highways to Zion. We are in God, yet we are still on the highways to enter into God—the great and exciting Christian pilgrimage. A pilgrim is a person who goes on a long journey of religious or moral significance to a foreign land. Typically, this is a physical foot journey, but we are talking about a heart journey to God. God is and always has been after our hearts—your heart and my heart. Our feet will follow our heart.

The great men and women of faith, as it tells us in Hebrews 11, were strangers and pilgrims on the earth looking for a country of their own, longing for a better heavenly country: “Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them” (v. 16). We walk with God, in the power of God, away from the world, and toward God, as we pilgrim the highways to Zion.

So, let’s consider the vanity of the world and its shallow pleasures that will soon be history as eternity marches on, and let us be persuaded to travel in the way that leads to heaven—holiness, self-denial, mortification, and obedience to all the commands of God, following Christ’s example. Let it be our daily work to walk in God’s strength, not our own, to walk in faith because He is faithful toward our goal.

Jim and Mary Reeves wrote a song that begins like this:

This world is not my home; I'm just passing through
My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue
The angels beckon me from Heaven's open door,
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.

~ Jeanine Dungan

WEEK THIRTEEN
DAY FIVE

**Blessed are those whose strength is in you,
in whose heart are the highways to Zion.
Psalm 84:5**

An old praise chorus echoes v. 5: “My life is in You, Lord; my hope is in You, Lord; my strength is in You, Lord...” Yet the song ends, and we return to the day’s labor, manifestly NOT seeking our strength in the LORD. If we enthusiastically proclaim, “My strength is in You,” why do we pursue so many other sources of strength?

Daily we draw strength from many wells, most of which are broken cisterns (Jer. 2) – people, occupations, places, or objects that provide temporal distraction or satisfaction but eventually disappoint. The spouse fails to meet needs. The job falls short of providing promised fulfillment. The trip was not as exciting as expected. The gadget did not guarantee its grandiose claims. We are tempted to echo with Ecclesiastes 1: “Vanity of vanities; all is vanity!”

The Hebrew word for “strength” – “oz” – has also been translated “fortress, might, power, and stronghold.” For our strength to be in an object implies two realities: 1) We draw necessary physical, emotional, or spiritual support from that object; 2) We fail in some way if not supported by that object. Consider Samson’s hair: His strength was in his hair, and its removal allowed his defeat (Judg. 13-16).

God did not craft us to acquire strength from any other Source than Himself. “We rest on Thee, our shield and our defender” should be the cry of every Christian to God. Whether or not we acknowledge Him, He is the Source of our strength – “In Him we live and move and have our being.” If He did not sustain us moment by moment, we would be consumed (Ps. 145, Lam. 3).

Read Ex. 15:2, Ps. 18:1-3, and Jer. 16:19; spend time meditating on the LORD as your Strength. Thank Him for His gentleness; ask for grace to see your idols for what they are and to seek your strength in Him today.

~ Elisabeth Hooker

