

Jesus Gives Us Strength to Fight

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Recently, we were in Marquette, MI, for a pastoral conference. Along the shore of Lake Superior are rocks that sometimes reach 20 feet above the lake. But 20 feet is not high enough to be safe from the immense power of Lake Superior. One of the pastors shared how some people lost their lives by venturing onto those rocks during storms, only to be swept away by the raging waves. Just imagine trying to stand against such forces. You couldn't do it.

The crashing waves of this world often smash against anyone who tries to stand up for Jesus. How can we withstand such powerful waves? Who can stand against these forces?

The answer is clear: no one can stand alone against these stormy waters unless they find a refuge—a safe hiding place.

Psalm 46:1-3 declares, "*God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam...*" This reminds us that in the midst of chaos, our safety and strength come from God Himself.

One of the earliest Christian symbols is an anchor. It reminds us that we can endure life's storms—not by our own strength, but because Christ holds us securely and steadfastly.

I'm not suggesting anyone should climb onto Black Rocks with a cross during a storm to stand against literal waves. But I am encouraging us to face spiritual storms, hatred, and persecution—not by relying on our own strength but trusting that the Lord of Sabaoth—the Lord of armies—is on our side.

Remember the scene from *The Lord of the Rings*, when Aragorn jumps into the boat, seemingly alone against the armies of Mordor. Suddenly, the army of the dead appears, streaming from behind him. That's the picture of how God's armies surround us when we stand on His promises. When we stand with Him, we are never truly alone. The strength of the Almighty and the armies of heaven surround us.

Therefore, we need not fear charging into spiritual battles. Jesus gives us the strength to stand firm, to persevere, and to fight.

Elijah's Despair and God's Comfort

In 1 Kings 19:4, Elijah sits under a broom tree and prays, *"It is enough; now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors."* Elijah had given up. He had long fought to call Israel to repentance and had just experienced God's mighty power in calling down fire from heaven. Yet now, he flees into the wilderness, overwhelmed and ready to quit.

Many of us can relate to Elijah's feelings. We learn early that standing out or speaking up for Jesus often makes us targets. The harder we try to do what's right, the more negativity seems to come our way—comments, rejection, and opposition.

Charlie Kirk is an example. You might not agree with everything he says, but I know that he's faced a barrage of harsh and often untrue accusations simply for standing up for his beliefs. That kind of opposition can make us want to give up.

But Elijah was not meant to stay under that broom tree. God came to him, just as He comes to us in our despair.

In John 16:33, Jesus says, ***"In Me, you may have peace. In the world, you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."*** Jesus, our Good Shepherd, finds Elijah sitting despondent and provides strength through rest and nourishment. He found Nathanael sitting under a tree, and He comes to us when we're ready to give up.

We don't have to give up when the world tries to beat us down, because we have a savior who has **"all power in heaven and earth"** and has promised that **"lo I am with you always."** He will always find us when we are under the broom tree, to give us the strength that we need to continue. Without him we would never be able to leave the broom tree but with his strength we can keep going.

God's Path and Provision

In 1 Kings 19:7-8, an angel of the Lord touches Elijah again, saying, ***"Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you."*** Elijah then eats and drinks, refreshed by God's provision, and journeys over 250 miles across treacherous terrain to Mount Horeb—the mountain of God.

This mountain is where God appeared to Moses, where He gave His law, and where Elijah would meet face-to-face with God. The very Son of God, the Lord Jesus Himself, came to Elijah with food and drink to renew his strength for the journey.

God has also laid out a path for us. Our path, like Elijah's, is challenging. We face storms, deserts, and heights that seem insurmountable. But remember—this journey is ultimately leading us to the mountain of God, where we will see Him face to face.

Acts 14:22 reminds us, ***"We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."*** Just as Elijah's journey was difficult, ours is too. We often feel weak and ready to give up under the weight of life's burdens and spiritual battles.

But Jesus, who died for our sins, has promised to give us the strength we need. He feeds us with bread from heaven—the Lord's Supper—and strengthens us through His Word. Even when we lack the strength ourselves, Christ's power sustains us.

Philippians 4:13 affirms, ***"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."*** Isaiah 35:3-4 urges us: ***"Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees... Be strong, do not fear... your God will come with vengeance; He will save you."***

As we lift high the cross—despite the scorn and hatred of the world—Christ has given us the strength to stand firm.

Looking Forward to the End

Finally, let us remember the words spoken to Daniel when he witnessed visions of peril and darkness. The angel assured him:

Daniel 12:10, 13: "Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand. But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days."

Though the evil and chaos of this world often threaten to drown us, we are assured that by God's grace, we will endure and ultimately reach the heavenly mountain—the eternal home where we will see Him face to face.

The world's hatred, sin, and chaos may beat us down, but we press on through His strength. We lift high the cross, confident in the Good Shepherd who leads us, sustains us, and brings us safely home.

In His name, and by His power, we can face every storm. Amen.