

ROBERT J. MORGAN

Bestselling Author of *Then Sings My Soul* and *The Red Sea Rules*

*The*  
STRENGTH  
YOU NEED

THE TWELVE GREAT STRENGTH  
PASSAGES OF THE BIBLE



*The*  
STRENGTH  
YOU NEED

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*The*  
STRENGTH  
YOU NEED

THE TWELVE GREAT STRENGTH  
PASSAGES OF THE BIBLE

ROBERT J. MORGAN



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*To Liam*

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## Extra Strength for Every Day

**W**orn out?

If you're tired today, you need more than rest; you need replenishment and rejuvenation. You need an infusion of power in the hidden core of your personality. My wife, Katrina, and I call this: *Extra Strength*.

Katrina has battled multiple sclerosis for more than a quarter-century, and for the last several years she's been confined to a wheelchair. During this time, I've tried to maintain a regular and busy schedule, adding "caregiver" to my roles and obligations and trying, usually successfully, to do it with a positive spirit. Because of our faith, we're both highly motivated, and neither of us likes to slow down or give up. But recently I've felt a little tired, and so has Katrina. The other day as we sat on the porch of our home in Roan Mountain, Tennessee, Katrina said, "Robert, will you bring me that bottle of extra strength pills from the kitchen?"

"Why?" I asked. "Do you have a headache?"

"No," she said. "It's the *extra strength* I need."

At first I thought she was kidding, but she wasn't; so I retrieved the bottle and studied it. Sure enough, there on the label was a blood-red designation: *Extra Strength*. I gave her a couple of pills—and even took two for

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myself. We chuckled at the experience, but it represents so much of what we all look for in our desire to find more inner power.

That little episode set me thinking: Where can we really find the extra strength required for each day? How do we build ourselves up when we've worn ourselves out?

I'm sure you know what it's like to be tired. Perhaps you feel exhausted right now. When our strength ebbs, it affects our emotions, which affects our relationships. The Devil knows our frailties, and he knows when we're bleak and weak. Our bodies, minds, and souls are wondrously intertwined, so when we droop in one area, it has a cascading effect. The Bible says, "If you falter in a time of trouble, how small is your strength!" (Prov. 24:10).

Yet we *do* falter and we *do* need extra strength.

That means getting exercise, rest, and good nutrition and staying as healthy as we can. But there's more. Our physical strength is enhanced by our mental attitudes or, conversely, impaired by them; and our mental attitudes are empowered or polluted by the wellsprings of the heart. That day on the porch, Katrina and I weren't on the verge of collapse, but we did feel the weariness that periodically seeps into our bones whatever our age or stage in life. Katrina often needs strength for the simplest tasks, and I need strength for everything from homemaking to globetrotting.

So do you. After all, we're living in a difficult age, and events on the world stage are disconcerting. In times like these, we need to be stronger husbands, stronger wives, and stronger people. We need stronger children, stronger families, stronger churches, and a stronger determination to tackle each day for good and for God. If you're like me, you want stronger faith, stronger peace, stronger joy, and more stamina to do the work the Lord assigns each day.

I long for the inner resources to stay afloat during crises and to rally the spirits of others. I want to be more tenacious, to persevere, to be undiscouraged, and undeterred. I want to be fortified against temptation and intimidation. I want to press through today into tomorrow with all the

toughness I can find, doing all this through Christ who strengthens me. And I want to do it all with optimism and joy.

That requires enormous strength, which is not only a universal need but also a moral obligation. We *ought* to be strong. We're *told* to be strong. The Bible commands us: "Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power" (Eph. 6:10). That's a frequent call in Scripture. The command "Be strong" occurs about forty times in the Bible from Deuteronomy 31:6 ("Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified . . . for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you") to 2 Timothy 2:1 ("You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus").

It's funny that Katrina's request for extra strength pills triggered all these thoughts in my mind, but that's how it happened. The next morning I decided to look up the word "strength" in the Bible. I did it in the simplest way. I didn't analyze any Hebrew or Greek words. Didn't use a variety of translations. Didn't open a lexicon or any linguistic aids. Didn't conduct an academic study of the word or even look up parallel terms like *strong*, *might*, or *power*. That would have been too much. There are so many verses and passages on these topics I would have been overwhelmed with references.

Even my initial scanning of the topic was daunting. The subject of extra strength pervades the Bible, which is what we'd expect from an almighty God. The Bible hums with the energy of divine omnipotence, and every page is powerful. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation, and the Word of God itself is alive and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword.

Everywhere we turn in Scripture, we see references to strength, might, power, energy, and omnipotence. The God of Scripture never grows weak or weary, and no amount of exertion can diminish His energy or resolve. He is majestic in power, and nothing is too hard for Him. His authority keeps the universe percolating without the slightest interruption or abeyance, for, as we read in Romans 1:20, "Since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made." Hebrews 1:3 says that

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Jesus Christ, who “is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His being, sustain[s] all things by His powerful word.”

The Bible repeatedly says, “God is able . . .” (Dan. 4:37; Rom. 14:4; 16:25; 2 Cor. 9:8; Eph. 3:20; 2 Tim. 1:12; Heb. 2:18; 5:2; 7:25; Rev. 5:5). Jeremiah said, “No one is like you, LORD; you are great, and your name is mighty in power” (Jer. 10:6). All things are possible for Him who can do all things (Matt. 19:26).

This isn’t just a theoretical subject. According to Ephesians 1:19–20, His incomparably great power is available “for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead.”

The heroes of the Bible knew how to tap into this dynamic. The apostle Peter said, “His divine power has given us everything we need” (2 Peter 1:3). The apostle Paul spoke of “all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me” (Col. 1:29). To the prophet Isaiah, the Lord said:

So do not fear, for I am with you;  
Do not be dismayed, for I am your God.  
I will strengthen you and help you;  
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. (Isa. 41:10)

I didn’t have the strength to look up all the synonyms of *strength* in the Bible, so I contented myself to look up the words *strength* and *strengthened* as they occur in just one translation. Even at that, I found more than two hundred references. Thumbing through each of them, I isolated several passages that spoke to my exact need. I adopted them as my *extra strength* verses. Katrina and I have worked on memorizing them. We’ve meditated on them as we arise in the morning and retire in the evening. As we study them, we feel like we’re connecting our 40-watt lives to the nuclear reactor of the very personality of God.

Katrina and I bear these promises in mind when weakened by stress

and strain. We've found few subjects more relevant. Our world today is enamored with strength: core strength, upper body strength, lower body strength, military strength, industrial strength, financial strength, emotional strength, personal strength, peace through strength, strength through peace. On the other hand, society views weakness as a liability. Who wants to hike through a dark forest with a weak flashlight, for example, or look for a job in a weak economy? Yet strength and weakness come and go, ebbing and flowing like tides backwashing into the harbors of our own hearts. Sometimes we feel weak as water, and we need extra strength. But the secret to extra strength isn't so much found in *medication* as in *meditation*. It's not extra strength *pills* we need, but extra strength *passages* from God's Word.

From my investigation of this term in Scripture, I chose twelve passages, studied them in depth, sought to claim them for myself, and taught them in a series of presentations under the title "Riveting Strength," and that's the background for this book.

In the following pages we'll set up our drills and derricks so we can tap into the Bible's strength passages like oilmen in the Coyote Hills. The only way to siphon out the needed deposits of personal strength is by drilling deeply into our relationship with the One whom Ambrose of Milan called the "God of all the strength and power."<sup>1</sup> That requires boring through the strata of Scripture—but there's nothing boring about that. Along the way, you'll meet some fascinating people who've discovered for themselves how to tap into God's extra strength and build themselves up when they've worn themselves out.

Here, then, are the dozen verses Katrina and I want to share with you as, according to Psalm 84, we set our hearts on pilgrimage, going from strength to strength till each of us appears before God in Zion. These are our strength strategies from Scripture.

In the following chapters, I want to show you these Gibraltar verses, explain their context, and give examples of how to apply them to life today. Katrina will occasionally chime in too. Keep an open Bible beside you as

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you read, underline the verses that most speak to you, pass along the salient points to others, and join Katrina and me as we find strength for the weary.

You can be stronger than you are. May the Lord use these twelve biblical passages and promises—and others as you find them in God’s Word—to give you “strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow.”<sup>2</sup>

## Connect to a High Voltage Line

Your strength will equal your days.

DEUTERONOMY 33:25

**I**n the list of American presidents, one man shows up twice—Grover Cleveland, the only chief executive to serve two non-consecutive terms. He occupies the twenty-second and twenty-fourth spots in the roll call of presidents. He's also the man who dedicated the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor, and he's the only president to have gotten married in the White House. He was forty-nine at the time; his bride, Frances Folsom, was twenty-one, making her the youngest First Lady in history. Their romance took the nation by storm.

Grover Cleveland was a Presbyterian preacher's kid who was thoroughly trained in Christian truth. He grappled with titanic issues in office, and in the middle of a national financial panic, he faced a personal crisis. He was diagnosed with cancer and endured top-secret surgery aboard a friend's yacht, the news of which was hidden from the nation for years. Nevertheless Cleveland kept up his strength and routinely worked past

midnight. Historians have lauded him for his industry, integrity, courage, and common sense. His dying words summed up his life: “I have tried so hard to do right.”

The secret of President Cleveland’s energy is found in the motto he lived by. It was a biblical promise, which he framed and hung directly over his bed so he could see it every night on retiring and every morning when awakening. I don’t know who crafted the engraving for him, but he valued it so highly that it hung on the wall of his law office before his election and afterward in his bedroom at the White House. Throughout his life, he kept it within eyesight. It contained a family crest, beneath which were a set of words taken from the King James Version of Deuteronomy 33:25:

As thy days, so shall thy strength be.

When asked about it, Cleveland said, “If I have any coat of arms and emblem, it is that.”<sup>1</sup> He awoke every morning with the firm conviction God would give him the strength required for the work assigned. He believed God would give him sufficient strength for each day’s tasks as long as he lived.

That promise can sustain all of us when we awaken in the morning and when we retire at night. It’s a lifelong promise of lifetime strength. The Living Bible puts it: “May your strength match the length of your days!” The Amplified Bible renders it: “As your day are, so will your strength, your rest and security be.” As I’ve studied it in the New International Version, I’ve relished the simple words “Your strength will equal your days.”

That’s a line in the Bible with high voltage. This biblical promise is so relevant to our lives the writer of the hymn “How Firm a Foundation” devoted an entire stanza to it, saying:

In every condition, in sickness, in health;  
In poverty’s vale, or abounding in wealth;

At home and abroad, on the land, on the sea,  
As thy days may demand, shall thy strength ever be.<sup>2</sup>

In its immediate context in Deuteronomy 33, this verse was originally spoken to the descendants of a man named Asher. Perhaps you've never studied this biblical character, for he's not as well-known as Peter, Paul, David, or Abraham. But as I traced his story through the Bible, I found four great passages that brought him and his descendants to life and helped me better appreciate the promise God gave them in Deuteronomy 33:25.

### ASHER'S BIRTH IN GENESIS 30

The story of Asher's birth is told in Genesis 30, where we learn the Patriarch Jacob had twelve sons by four different women. These boys were the great-grandsons of Abraham and the grandsons of Isaac, and they became the founders of the twelve tribes of Israel. Asher was number eight. He was the second son of his mother, Zilpah, but the eighth son of his father, Jacob. Asher's birth announcement is given in Genesis 30:12–13:

Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. Then Leah said, "How happy I am! The women will call me happy." So she named him Asher.

Asher is a Hebrew word meaning "happy," and this is the first time the word "happy" occurs in the Bible. Think of it! This boy was named Happy, not because he was happy himself—though I suspect he was probably a happy person by temperament—but because, from the beginning of his life, he made others happy. That's a great name to bear. We should all be named that—Happy or Blessed or One Who Makes Others Happy.

Despite his convivial name, the Bible devotes little ink to Asher as he grew up. We don't know much about him, and the book of Genesis reveals

little of his actions or activities. In classical Jewish rabbinical literature, he's described as a wise man who did his best to maintain harmony among his quarreling brothers. He was thought to be a reconciler, a peacemaker. Those are only the traditions about him, but somehow I think they're accurate.

### ASHER'S BLESSING IN GENESIS 49

The next time we see Asher is near the end of Genesis, in chapter 49, as he and his siblings gathered at the deathbed of their father, Jacob. The old Patriarch rallied his strength to give each son a final blessing. We can visualize the scene as Jacob propped himself on pillows, leaned forward, looked around the room, and addressed every son in turn, giving prophecies to each one. When he came to Asher, he had a short but special prediction, which is recorded in Genesis 49:20: "Asher's food will be rich; he will provide delicacies fit for a king."

In other words, Jacob, who perhaps realized his son had a green thumb, was pronouncing a blessing or a prediction that the descendants of Asher would be food producers, and their products would be the best in Israel. The implication: they would be a happy tribe, living up to their name and making others happy with the richest and finest of food and drink.

### ASHER'S TRIBE IN DEUTERONOMY 33

After Jacob died, his descendants multiplied to become a great nation and were enslaved in Egypt until Moses came and delivered them in the exodus and led them into the wilderness toward the promised land. While wandering around in the desert, Moses conducted a census. There were 41,500 young men of the tribe of Asher strong enough to bear arms in the developing Israelite army (Num. 1:41). Asher wasn't the largest or the smallest

of the twelve tribes; it was mid-sized. A generation later another census occurred and the number had grown to 53,400 (Num. 26:47).

When the time came to possess the promised land, Moses handed the reins of leadership to Joshua. In Deuteronomy 33, the aged lawgiver gathered the tribes of Israel around him and pronounced a blessing on each one, just as Jacob had earlier done to their forefathers. These blessings comprised Moses' last recorded words.

Deuteronomy 33 is a sort of reenactment of Genesis 49. Just as Jacob, when dying, blessed each of his twelve sons, so Moses, just before vanishing from the scene, blessed each of the twelve tribes that descended from those sons.

From tribe to tribe, from blessing to blessing, we follow the heart of Moses in Deuteronomy 33 as he prayed for each one. In verse 24, he pronounced his blessing on the Happy Tribe, the Asherites, whom Moses described as “most blessed,” that is, “most happy.”

About Asher he said: “Most blessed of sons is Asher; let him be favored by his brothers, and let him bathe his feet in oil.”

Interestingly, some people believe this was a secret prophecy regarding petroleum deposits in the Asherite territory of Israel. In recent years, one oil company began drilling for oil in this area, influenced by this verse.<sup>3</sup> While I hope petroleum discoveries are found in Israel, I don't think that's the intent of Deuteronomy 33:24. This is talking about olive oil, not fossil fuel; and it harkens back to Jacob's prayer for the agricultural success of the tribe of Asher. Abraham and Moses were praying that olive groves and grape vineyards would blanket the hills of Asher. It was a prayer for the rich production of olive oil in such abundance people could bathe their feet in it.

That's exactly what happened. Shortly afterward, when the promised land was divided up and allocated among the twelve tribes, Asher received a prized strip of land in the northern regions of Israel bordering

the Mediterranean Sea (Josh. 19:24–31). If overlaid on a modern map, it would run from the Israeli city of Haifa northward all the way to the city of Tyre in southern Lebanon. This is some of the richest agricultural sod in the Middle East with a mild climate and abundant rainfall. It was a breadbasket in biblical times and was especially known for its olive orchards. In times of abundance and drought, Asher provided olive oil and agricultural products for the nation of Israel.

But Moses wasn't done. In Deuteronomy 33:25, he prayed for the territory of Asher to be fortified and protected: "The bolts of your gates will be iron and bronze." These were the strongest metals known in that day, and it was symbolic of homeland security.

Then comes our key verse—the wonderful last half of Deuteronomy 33:25:

. . . and your strength will equal your days.

Moses, then, promised the tribe of Asher an agriculturally fruitful territory with an abundance of olive orchards, with well-fortified cities, and with perpetual strength. He prayed that as long as the tribe of Asher existed, it would possess strength—strength equal to its days. As long as you're alive, Moses told them, you will have the strength you need to do what God assigns and you will have strength to bear whatever each day brings.

But there's more. Verses 26–27 go on to say: "There is no one like the God of Jeshurun [the God of the Upright], who rides across the heavens to help you and on the clouds in his majesty. The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."<sup>4</sup>

With those words Moses wrapped up his final message to Israel, gazed a final time across the multitudes, and then climbed Mount Nebo, where he passed away and was buried in an unmarked grave (Deut. 34:6). The blessings in Deuteronomy 33, then, represent the final words of Moses.

ASHER'S DESCENDANT IN LUKE 2

There's an addendum to the story—something that happened fourteen centuries later in the New Testament. At the dawn of the gospel age, when Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Luke 2, Joseph and Mary took their newborn to the temple in nearby Jerusalem for His dedication. There they encountered an elderly woman named Anna.

There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, *of the tribe of Asher*. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. (vv. 36–38, emphasis mine)

Anna, a descendant of the happy tribe of Asher, was privileged to see Him who had come to bless all the world with good tidings of great joy. Her aged eyes recognized the Christ child, and she gave thanks to God and spoke of the newborn Messiah to all who were looking for the redemption of Israel. She saw Him, embraced Him, explained Him to others, and became one of His first heralds.

How interesting that the biblical story of Asher is anchored by senior citizens who found strength in their latter years to fulfill their mission for the Lord:

- The aged Patriarch Jacob, whose deathbed blessing provided the framework of Asher's heritage.
- The venerable lawgiver Moses, whose final words set the course of Asher's history.

- The elderly Anna, whose greatest ministry occurred near the end of her life as she announced the first advent of the Messiah.

Jacob, Moses, Anna, Asher, and the tribe bearing his name—and you and me through Christ—are the recipients of a precious promise: “Your strength will equal your days.”

### ASHER’S LESSONS FOR US

That’s the biblical story of the tribe of Asher, which gives us the background behind this great strength passage in Deuteronomy 33. As I studied verse 25 against this backdrop, I jotted down five lessons that encouraged me.

*When we belong to Christ, we belong to a happy tribe.* There’s a sense in which we become honorary members of the tribe of Asher when we confess Jesus as Lord and believe in our hearts God has raised Him from the dead (Rom. 10:9–10). The Lord Jesus came to give abundant life, and only when we yield our hearts to Him can we tap into His joy. As Christ’s followers we’re appointed to live joyful lives and to bring a message of happiness to others. True happiness comes through a relationship with God via Christ; and once we know Him, we’re obliged to live joyfully, for that reflects our Lord. Like Asher, we are most blessed—the happiest people on earth.

I wrote about this in my book *Mastering Life Before It’s Too Late*:

God’s very personality is full of joy. He is a God of joy. He is joyful in His essence and joyful by nature. He is joyful to the unfathomable core of His being. His character radiates joy like the sun radiating light, and it’s impossible for us to experience genuine joy without conceptualizing the joyfulness of the Divine. . . .

Christians therefore have a sacred obligation to live joyfully. Joy is

the duty of the Christian. According to Ecclesiastes 5:20, we should be “occupied with joy. . . .”<sup>5</sup>

The joy of the Lord is the only dynamic that enables us to keep moving forward at life’s hardest moments. This kind of joy doesn’t cancel the difficult moments of life, but it does transcend life’s circumstances.<sup>6</sup>

*Second, when we belong to Christ, He is our prosperity and protection.* The Asherite region overflowed with olive oil, and the bolts of the gates of its cities were iron and bronze. Olive oil is a symbol in the Bible of the Holy Spirit and of joy, and bolts and gates are symbols of protection. When we belong to Christ, He is our prosperity and protection. He anoints our heads with oil and bathes our feet with joy. Romans 10:15 says, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.” The Lord secures us within His protective gates of iron and bronze. Jesus said in John 10:9: “I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture.”

We have enemies in life, the worst being Satan and his weapons of death and despair. He comes to steal, kill, and destroy. I was astonished the other day to read 1 John 5:19: “We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.” Think of the implication of that sentence—the whole world is under Satan’s control. The geo-political world. The world of entertainment. The world of academia. The world of finance. The worlds of philosophy and religion. The whole world is under the control of the evil one—except for those who are children of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

When you see the world tilting in a hellish direction, picture the safety of being protected within cross-shaped gates of iron and bronze. We’re in the care of Him who said in His great prayer of John 17:15: “My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.”

*Next, we have a Baby to introduce to the world.* Just as the Bible’s final

reference to Asher is an announcement about Christ by aged Anna, so our great purpose on earth is to proclaim “Joy to the world! The Lord has come!” The Lord brings happiness to our hearts, gives us protection and prosperity, and commissions us as His ambassadors. He gives purpose to our earthly lives, and like Anna, we are to give thanks to God and speak about the Child to all who are looking forward to redemption.

Recently I’ve been thinking about how many people it takes—sometimes an entire church with everyone plying their gifts—to win others to Christ. It’s not just one preacher, one evangelist, one invitation, one worship service, or one piece of literature.

Last Sunday I told my congregation in Nashville how Bill Bright, the evangelistic powerhouse who started Campus Crusade for Christ (now Cru), became a Christian as a young adult. Growing up in Oklahoma, he had wanted to become a rancher, get his law degree, own a newspaper, and run for public office. All that changed December 7, 1941, with Pearl Harbor. Bill was in college at the time, and he repeatedly tried to enlist in the armed forces but was rejected because of a perforated eardrum from a football injury.

He thought if he went to Los Angeles he might have a better chance of enlisting because of the volume of men pouring through the recruiting stations there. His mother, a dedicated Christian, packed a Bible into his belongings.

On his first night in Los Angeles, Bill picked up a hitchhiker who asked him where he was staying. Bill didn’t have accommodations, and the hitchhiker invited him to stay where he was staying. It was with Dawson Trotman, the founder of the Navigators, who was zealous about winning and discipling young people for Christ.

A day or two later he tried to enlist in the military but again failed because of his eardrum. He eventually started his own business, selling specialty foods. He leased a room from an elderly couple who kept inviting him to Hollywood’s First Presbyterian Church. One day he slipped into

the back row of the church. The preacher was a good Bible teacher and Bill Bright found himself interested in the messages.

He soon received a phone call from a worker in the young adult division. She invited Bill to a party at the ranch of a movie star who attended the church. Bill agreed and that's how he began hanging around with a group of Christian singles. Eventually he began attending the young adult worship services on Wednesday nights, which were conducted by Dr. Henrietta Mears. Her Bible teaching began to create real interest in Bill about the Bible and about the gospel. He started making more friends. A lot of these young people gathered at the home of a man named Elwain Steinkamp, a real estate developer who built the prestigious Bel Air community. He made his large swimming pool available to the church.

One day beside the pool, Mr. Steinkamp said to Bill: "Material success is not where you find happiness. There are rich people all over this city who are the most miserable people you'll ever meet. Knowing and serving Jesus Christ is what's really important. He's the only way to find happiness." Then Mr. Steinkamp quoted the words of Jesus: "What does it profit a person if he gains the whole world but loses his own soul?"

That spoke to Bill, and he returned to his apartment and found the Bible his mother had packed for him. He began reading it. Several months passed, and one Wednesday night in the spring of 1945, Dr. Mears was teaching from Acts 22 on the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. She talked about Paul's two questions: "Who are you, Lord? What would you have me do?" Those are the most important questions we can ever ask, she said.

Bill returned to his apartment, knelt beside his bed, and gave his life to Jesus. Almost immediately he began winning others to Jesus. He poured himself into developing ways of reaching young adults and college students, and he went on to initiate some of the greatest evangelistic ministries the world has seen.

I shared that story with my church to show them it takes all of us working together to win people to Christ. In this case there was a whole cast

of characters: a hitchhiker, a host who opened his home, a pastor, a Bible teacher, a set of landlords, a young lady on the phone, a young adult group, a movie star, a businessman with a swimming pool, and last but not least a mother who packed a Bible in her son's suitcase.

What happened there can happen with you and your church. We have the same God. We have the same purpose. Your city is filled with children, teens, young adults, and adults of all ages needing Christ. We cross paths with them every day, and as honorary members of the tribe of Asher we're given the joy of doing what Anna did during the first Christmas season—embracing Christ and announcing Him to the world. The Lord uses all of us as part of the process of fulfilling His mission.<sup>7</sup>

Paul made this point when he said in 1 Corinthians 3: “What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow” (vv 5–6).

Not all of us will play a starring role, and we may not see immediate results from our efforts; but God has assigned each of us a task in doing His work. He will give the increase—and that leads to my next observation.

*The Lord promises us strength equal to our days.* We'll never awaken to a morning in which the Lord has given us work to do or burdens to bear without providing the strength we need. We typically measure our lives in years; God measures our lives in terms of days. The earth revolves on its axis every twenty-four hours, giving us 365 new beginnings every year. The Bible says, “His compassions never fail. They are new every morning” (Lam. 3:22–23). The apostle Paul said, “Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day” (2 Cor. 4:16). Jesus told us to take up our cross daily (Luke 9:23). God allots our work in one-day increments, and that's the only way we can tackle life.

Last year I visited Franklin D. Roosevelt's home in Hyde Park, New York, which is also the site of his presidential library. One of the displays is

his original desk from the Oval Office, set up the way it was when he was president. It was so covered with equipment, papers, and knickknacks I wondered how he got anything done there. But the item that most intrigued me was a beautiful wooden frame. It didn't contain a picture of his wife or mother or children. At the top of the frame, the word "ENGAGEMENTS" was stamped in gold, and beneath the glass was the president's schedule for the day. It was called his "Appointments Easel," and every morning his daily agenda was slipped under the glass so he would know the plan for the day.

I believe God has an appointment easel set up in heaven for each of us, that He has a daily agenda for each of our lives. Psalm 139:16 says, "You saw me before I was born and scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe. Every day was recorded in your book."<sup>8</sup> Stamped in stenciled letters across every day of our lives are the letters STRENGTH!

If we look at the immensity of the problems we face or the backlog of work towering over us like a mountain range, we'll break down. But everything changes when we realize we can't do yesterday's work or tomorrow's work or all the work. We can't solve yesterday's problems or tomorrow's problems or all the problems. We can simply do what God has assigned us today. Just for today we can do God's will, and just for today we'll have the needed strength to do the work and bear the load.

The promise in Deuteronomy 33:25 is that we'll have sufficient God-given strength for all our God-assigned tasks through each of our God-appointed days. Your strength will equal your days. And in God's providence, the final drops of our earthly strength in this life will perfectly correspond with the finishing of the work He has given us to do, and then we'll be taken up to heaven where we'll never know a weary day. Until then we can tap into God's enthusiasm without fearing inadequate internal resources. As Jesus taught us to pray "Give us this day our daily bread," so we can pray "Give us today our daily strength."

As I've studied the writings of earlier generations of Christians, I've come to realize how many heroes of the faith leaned heavily on Deuteronomy

33:25. The great preacher Charles Spurgeon, in a sermon based on this text, said: “The same God who guides the stars in their courses, who directs the earth in its orbit, who feeds the burning furnace of the sun, and keeps the stars perpetually burning with their fires—the same God has promised to supply thy strength. . . . As thy days, so shall thy strength be.”<sup>9</sup>

About the same time Spurgeon preached his sermon on Deuteronomy 33:25, in the mid-1850s, a woman in Hawaii was clinging to the same verse for dear life. Her name was Lucy Thurston, and she was sixty. One day she found a tumor in her breast and was subsequently diagnosed with cancer. Her doctors advised her to consider immediate surgery, but they warned they couldn’t use chloroform. The use of anesthesia was new, its side effects were unknown, and they were afraid to use it because Lucy had once battled a case of paralysis. She would be wide-awake during the surgery with nothing to dull the pain.

On the night before the operation, Lucy paced back and forth with a sense of helplessness and fear. But after praying and committing her fears to the Lord, as she later said, she was able to lay her head on the pillow and “sleep refreshingly.” The next morning she awakened with a promise from God echoing in her heart—Deuteronomy 33:25.

“A bright day opened upon us,” she later wrote to her daughter. “My feelings were natural, cheerful, elevated. I took the Lord at his own word: ‘As thy day is, so shall thy strength be.’ There with an unwavering heart, I leaned for strength and support.”

Lucy’s letter to her daughter is a remarkable document, almost a moment-by-moment description of what happened during her surgery, and I wouldn’t advise reading it if you’re faint of heart. Lucy recounted in bloody detail the entire procedure of undergoing a radical mastectomy, performed while wide-awake without anesthesia. But God gave her supernatural strength for the day and she was able to bear it. The surgery was a success and Lucy Thurston lived for another twenty-one years, finding God’s strength sufficient in one-day allocations.<sup>10</sup>

I can't imagine what Lucy endured; but none of us knows what any given day will bring, and sometimes we have to face life without anesthesia. Life can change in a moment, and every day is filled with emergencies, stresses, distresses, and disasters. At the same time, every day holds the promise of work, labor, purpose, success, and fulfillment. As children of God, we have a promise in Deuteronomy 33:25 with no cutoffs, letups, lapses, or hindrances: God will give you the strength to complete any task He assigns or to bear any burden He allows, for as our days, shall our strength ever be.

Elisabeth Elliot warns against worrying too much about tomorrow, for, she says: "The future is not our province. . . . We are meddling with God's business when we let all manner of imaginings loose, predicting disaster, contemplating possibilities instead of following, one day at a time, God's plain and simple pathway. . . . 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be' was Moses' blessing for Asher—in other words, your strength will equal your days. God knows how to apportion each one's strength according to that day's need, however great or small."<sup>11</sup>

*Finally, don't forget that beneath us are the everlasting arms.* As Moses wrapped up his final message to the nation of Israel, he ended with one of the most powerful images that ever flowed from his lips: "Your strength will equal your days. There is no one like the God of Jeshurun, who rides across the heavens to help you and on the clouds in His majesty. The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."

I like the way Patricia Knight puts this in her book, *Pure Joy*. "No matter what the Lord chooses as your assignment for each day," she wrote, "He will also provide the strength. 'Your strength will equal your days.' And then, if a situation becomes too tough, 'the eternal God is your refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms.'"<sup>12</sup>

I wonder what comes to your mind when picturing that phrase. I used to think of this image in terms of high trapeze artists flying through the air, missing their grip, and plunging into the net below. It's easy for me to

visualize Deuteronomy 33:25 in that way. When we lose our grip on life, we fall—but only into the safety net of the Lord’s everlasting arms.

But Moses had never been to a circus. He had been a shepherd, and earlier in Deuteronomy 1:29–31, he said: “Do not be terrified; do not be afraid. . . . The LORD your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, and in the wilderness. There you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place.”

Earlier this year as I hiked with a friend in the Dolomites, we came across a newborn lamb that had fallen into a narrow crevice. In struggling to get out, it had buried itself more deeply in the unyielding rock, becoming hopelessly stuck. The flies had gathered, and the little lamb had given up and was dying. It was so squeezed into the fissure it couldn’t move a muscle. We heaved a rock out of the way, and I lifted the lamb out of the cranny—out of its cesspool of manure and urine—slid my arms under its belly, pressed it against my chest, and carried it down the hill to reunite it with the flock. There was an occasional bleat, but he seemed to know he was secure in my arms. This is the picture Moses had in mind when he said “. . . and underneath are the everlasting arms.”

Sometimes we feel we’re stuck in a depression or abyss. We’re in a jam. We’re squeezed into a fissure that’s trying to squeeze out our faith. We grow discouraged. Perhaps even now you feel like giving up.

This is the time to remember the promise of Asher. When you belong to Jesus, you belong to a happy tribe. He is your prosperity and protection. He bathes your feet in the oil of His Spirit. He is your message of joy for the world, and He apportions strength for each day. As Isaiah said, “He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart” (Isa. 40:11).

As long as you live, God will keep His promise to impart sufficient strength for the work He assigns and the burdens He allows. Tap into His endless current of divine energy. His promise, “Your strength will equal your days,” is a high voltage line of Scripture, and you can connect to it now.

A WORD FROM KATRINA

I grew up in a Finnish home in Maine, moved to Florida, and then to South Carolina, where I met Robert in college in 1973. We were married in 1976, began pastoring in 1977, and have raised three daughters.

In the late 1980s, I began having strange sensations in my extremities—a burning feeling and numbness of hands and feet. I recall stretching out on the floor so Rob and the girls could pull at my hands and feet because somehow that relieved my discomfort. As I walked through our community every day for exercise, my legs developed a funny feeling. One day at the airport they stopped working altogether. I was stranded in the concourse, unable to move. Shortly thereafter, in 1990, I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis.

Today I'm confined to a wheelchair. Every morning as Rob lifts me out of bed and into the bathroom, the weakness is the same. It never gets better. But I've learned to remember Deuteronomy 33:25 and let it determine my mindset. It's very practical to me because it reminds me God's strength is proportional to each day's challenge. I've never had a day when the power supply from this verse was interrupted. I don't always have a lot of strength, but I have sufficient strength for what's required. You will too.

*As my days, so shall my strength be.*

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