

Increasing Your Strength

Tell story of breaking leg playing football. 12 years old. Around April time. 16 weeks in plaster. Bones reconnected only one quarter of an inch which reduced to 1/8th of an inch. Wedge in plaster to move bone but left in.

When you are break a bone, you think it will never heal or be as strong as it was originally. Your bone and leg have been through a crisis. It has completely lost its strength. All you can do is have the bone re-set and then wait in hopeful expectation that the natural healing process that God has put in place will work. You wait in hopeful expectation but you must also at the right time continue to walk and then eventually run again.

Why did God design the repair process to last so long and be so slow? His understanding is unsearchable. God designed the body and he designed the repair process. The process of healing and repair takes time, is slow and it can't be rushed. All you can do is wait in hopeful expectation. At first you must REST and not MOVE. Then in time you need to move slowly and build up slowly.

Isa 40:28-31 (ESV)

“Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. 29 He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. 30 Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; 31 but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”

The background to the verses in Isaiah is the Israelites had been in exile in Babylon for several decades. They were discouraged, demoralised, worn out, tired and weary. They wondered if they were invisible to God and abandoned by him (see Is. 40:27). They questioned whether God no longer cared for them or wasn't able to help them. The phrase “faint and weary” is repeated 3 times. This summed up how God's people felt. Faint and weary. God's people were exhausted and weak in body and spirit.

When you are faint and weary you have a choice. You can pay attention to what you have lost. Or you can pay attention to what you still have. God's people from Babylon could focus on all they had lost back in Israel or they could pay attention to the God they still had, who He was and what He could do.

In 1944, sixteen-year-old ballerina Edith Eger was sent to Auschwitz. Separated from her parents on arrival, she endured unimaginable experiences, including being made to dance for the infamous Josef Mengele. When the camp is finally liberated, she is pulled from a pile of bodies, barely alive. The horrors of the Holocaust didn't break Edith. In fact, they helped her learn to live again with a life-affirming strength and a truly remarkable resilience.

Here's a short video from Edith. Warning if you have young kids: she discusses her experience in a concentration camp (not graphically) and the story following. If you don't want kids to hear you can take them out for 5 mins.

https://youtu.be/i_cEsbylqQ

Here's a section of her book *The Choice* by Edith Eger, Chapter 3:

“ALL YOUR ECSTASY in life is going to come from the inside,” my ballet master had told me. I never understood what he meant. Until Auschwitz. Magda stares at the chimney on top of the building our mother entered. “The soul never dies,” she says. My sister finds words of comfort. But I am in shock. I am numb. I can't think about the incomprehensible things that are happening, that have already happened. I can't picture my mother consumed by flames. I can't fully grasp that she is gone. And I can't ask why. I can't even grieve. Not now. It will take all of my attention to survive the next minute, the next breath. I will survive if my sister is there. I will survive by attaching myself to her as though I am her shadow. We are herded through the silent yet echoing showers. We are robbed of our hair. We stand outside, shorn and naked, waiting for our uniforms.

I turn to my sister, who has fallen into her own shocked silence, who has managed in each chaotic dash from place to place, in every crowded line, not to leave my side. She shivers as the sun falls. She holds in her hands her shorn locks, thick strands of her ruined hair. We have been standing naked for hours, and she grips her hair as though in holding it she can hold on to herself, her humanity. She is so near that we are almost touching, and yet I long for her. Magda. The confident, sexy girl with all the jokes. Where is she? She seems to be asking the same question. She searches for herself in her ragged clumps of hair. The contradictions in this place unnerve me. Murder, we've just learned, is efficient here. Systematic. But there seems to be no system in place for distributing the uniforms for which we've been waiting most of the day. The guards are cruel and rigid, yet it seems that no one is in charge. The scrutiny they give our bodies doesn't signal our value, it signifies only the degree to which we have been forgotten by the world. Nothing makes sense. But this, too, the interminable waiting, the complete absence of reason, must be part of the design. How can I keep myself steady in a place where the only steadiness is in fences, in death, in humiliation, in the steadily churning smoke? Magda finally speaks to me.

“How do I look?” she asks. “Tell me the truth.” The truth? She looks like a mangy dog. A naked stranger. I can't tell her this, of course, but any lie would hurt too much and so I must find an impossible answer, a truth that doesn't wound. I gaze into the fierce blue of her eyes and think that even for her to ask the question, “How do I look?” is the bravest thing I've ever heard. There aren't mirrors here. She is asking me to help her find and face herself. And so I tell her the one true thing that's mine to say.

“Your eyes,” I tell my sister, “they're so beautiful. I never noticed them when they were covered up by all that hair.”

It's the first time I see that we have a choice: to pay attention to what we've lost or to pay attention to what we still have. “Thank you,” she whispers.

Eger, Edith. *The Choice* (pp. 37-38). Ebury Publishing. Kindle Edition.

When you are faint and weary you have a choice. You can pay attention to what you have lost. Or you can pay attention to what you still have. God's people from Babylon were faint and weary and could focus on all they had lost back in Israel or they could pay attention to the God they still had, who He was and what He could do.

How does Isaiah respond?

V28. "Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable."

Isaiah first gets them to look to and remember the character and nature of God. He is everlasting. He is Creator. He does not grow faint or weary. No one can fathom his understanding or thoughts. Or no one can measure the depths of his understanding.

Faint and weary are emphasised here 3 times. We grow faint and weary but God does not.

Why is important to know and understand that God does not grow faint or weary? Well, He is the one who fights our battles. He is the one who helps us and answers our prayers. He is our source of strength and power. So even if we are faint and weary, we can relax and draw confidence that our God is on our side and does not grow faint or weary.

Not only does God not grow faint or weary, He wants to give His unlimited strength and power away.

29 "He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength."

So here we learn that God gives power to the faint. He increases strength to the weak. This is great news. We can receive power and strength from the one who has unlimited strength and power no matter how weak, tired and faint we feel.

The question then becomes how do you receive that strength and power?

30 "Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; 31 but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

Even young men shall be faint and weary. Rowland and Adrielle completed their first 2 munros yesterday. Rowland, is it fair to say at times you felt a tiny bit weary? But when weary you come to the river for refreshing. Let's watch this from yesterday's Get On Yer Hike.

We are told here that strength and power come to those who wait. God loves to help those who are weak and weary. He loves to increase strength. They shall be able to run and not become tired. Imagine that! They shall walk without becoming faint. You shall Get On Yer Hike up the Scottish Munro's without getting exhausted.

Isaiah here is pointing out God's incredible strength. But not only that. He is highlighting that God is deeply concerned for people and especially weak and weary people. Isaiah is emphasising that God is not only strong but He is loving and loves to give that strength away. He's a generous God who loves to give to those who come and receive. God not only has power but love and kindness and loves to give His power away.

Wait On the Lord

So how do we renew our strength? Take 3 holidays per year? Eat healthy? Exercise? Get outdoors more? Don't misunderstand me here. I believe in all these things for mental and physical health and they are important. But Isaiah is talking about a deeper source of inner strength here and a rest for your heart and soul.

Augustine of Hippo said:

“Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee.”

Our bodies and mind need rest but their rest is enhanced when the soul and heart finds rest from guilt, fear, condemnation, insecurity and evil desires etc etc. That's why Jesus came and died on the Cross so we could be forgiven and free from guilt, fear, condemnation, insecurity and victory over temptation. It's given to those who believe, put their trust in him and repent. That means admit and confess your sin, ask for forgiveness and turn and go in the opposite direction with a changed outlook of what is right and good.

[Isa. 40:30](#) “even youths shall faint and be weary; and young men shall fall exhausted”. In other words, even those in their prime with perfect health have limits. Yes, we can do much to give our bodies and minds rest but our souls and hearts must rest and how?

We are told that it comes to those who wait on the Lord. Barnes' Notes on the Bible says:

“The word rendered 'wait upon' here (from קוּוָה qâvâh), denotes properly to wait, in the sense of expecting. The phrase, 'to wait on Yahweh,' means to wait for his help; that is, to trust in him, to put our hope or confidence in him.

It does not imply inactivity, or want of personal exertion; it implies merely that our hope of aid and salvation is in him -

And they only wait on him in a proper manner who expect his blessing in the common modes in which he imparts it to men - in the use of those means and efforts which he has appointed, and which he is accustomed to bless. The farmer who should wait for God to plow and sow his fields, would not only be disappointed, but would be guilty of provoking Him. And so the man who waits for God to do what he ought to do; to save him without using any of the means of grace, will not only be disappointed, but will provoke his displeasure.”

Barnes' Notes on the Bible. See full quote below *

What is he saying? He is saying to wait on the Lord means to have hopeful expectation in God. We should go on doing and acting what we believe to be right as directed by Him but expect his blessing. Waiting on him then means that we don't sit around doing nothing. If I'm a farmer and want God's blessing then I must wait on his blessing. I will put my hopeful expectation in the God who blesses the work of my hands, I will plow my fields and sow my seed then wait in hopeful expectation for God to do what only He can do. **Wait then means doing what only I can do while waiting expectantly on God doing what only He can do.** If I need a new job, I will fast and pray and wait. I will then apply for the right jobs and keep

sowing the seed of job applications while waiting expectantly on God's blessing in His perfect timing.

It's interesting to note that those who wait on the Lord will fly, run or walk. They all suggest renewed strength for activity. Waiting is not passive doing nothing although that's okay for a time. Waiting involves EXPECTING and ACTING. This is faith and faith is a cycle. It starts by hearing's God's word. It grows when that is then believed. It then must be confessed and spoken out but expectant waiting and faith is continued by action.

Esther and Nehemiah model EXPECTANT waiting that is not passive. They do what only they can do while waiting expectantly on God to do what only He can do.

Esther faced a crisis – the destruction of all the Jews who were to be killed in one day. Esther called a fast for 3 days and then said: "And so I will go to the king which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish." Esther 4:16. Esther waited on the Lord. She waited in hopeful expectation but she did not do nothing. She organised a banquet and expected God to show up miraculously and He did and completely transformed the crisis. The massacre of the Jews was averted.

Nehemiah similarly during the time of Israel's exile in Babylon when Jerusalem was destroyed. He sat down, wept and mourned for many days and fasted and prayed. He then WAITED in hopeful expectation. What did he do? Nothing? He continued to walk as a cupbearer to the king. The king noticed he was sad and GOD showed up. The king said: Neh.2:4. "What do you request? So I prayed to the God of heaven." He then asks boldly a big request and it's granted. He rebuilds the walls of Jerusalem finishing them in 52 days on October 2nd – Lynsey's birthday. That's waiting on the Lord! Waiting leads to crisis transformation.

So then, renewed strength comes to those who wait on the Lord but that waiting is not passive. This then becomes about us doing our part then waiting on God to do the rest. It's about admitting our weakness, lack of strength and inability to God. We admit to God that we need His strength and cannot do it on our own. Fasting and prayer is an opportunity to reveal our need to God like Esther and Nehemiah. We then wait which includes patience but in Hebrew includes hopeful expectation. That is why the NIV interprets it:

Isa 40:31 (NIV)

"but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

We must come to God. We must wait in hopeful expectation that He will give us the strength we need for whatever He has called us to do. Remember the words of Jesus:

Mat 11:28-30 (NIV)

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

The yoke of discipleship to Jesus brings rest to your soul because he is gentle and humble in heart. He said his yoke is easy and his burden light. When you are yoked to Jesus you will have to go at His pace and slow down. When do you see Jesus in a hurry? Being yoked to Jesus will lead to rest for your souls also because you will have to “Ruthlessly Eliminate Hurry From Your Lives” and hurry is toxic to your soul.

You will also find rest because he will give strength and power to the weak and weary to help them walk through this life. He will give them His Spirit inside of them. The Holy Spirit will provide the power and strength to walk and run His race without becoming weary.

So what must I do?

Come to Him. Wait on Him. Wait in hopeful expectation. Admit your weakness and need of Him. Fast and Pray. Ask and invite the Holy Spirit. Worship and wait.

What will be the result?

Your strength will be renewed. You will walk and not faint. You will run and not grow weary. You shall mount up with wings like eagles.

An eagle can escape danger by taking to the skies. An eagle's safety lies in the skies. Our safety lies within our Creator.

Ex.19:3-4

Exo 19:4 (NIV)

'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.'

You shall mount up on wings like eagles. A great picture that God will carry you himself to bring you to Himself. And from there you will find safety and renewed strength.

Deu 32:10-11 (MSG)

"He found him out in the wilderness, in an empty, windswept wasteland. He threw his arms around him, lavished attention on him, guarding him as the apple of his eye. 11 He was like an eagle hovering over its nest, overshadowing its young, Then spreading its wings, lifting them into the air, teaching them to fly."

By waiting on the Lord your strength is renewed and you are brought to Him to take care of you, protect you, lift you and teach you to fly!

**"The word rendered 'wait upon' here (from נָתַן qâvâh), denotes properly to wait, in the sense of expecting. The phrase, 'to wait on Yahweh,' means to wait for his help; that is, to trust in him, to put our hope or confidence in him.*

It does not imply inactivity, or want of personal exertion; it implies merely that our hope of aid and salvation is in him - a feeling that is as consistent with the most strenuous endeavors to secure the object, as it is with a state of inactivity and indolence. Indeed, no man can wait on God in a proper manner who does not use the means which he has appointed for conveying to us his blessing. To wait on him without using any means to obtain his aid, is to tempt him; to expect miraculous interposition is unauthorized, and must meet with disappointment.

And they only wait on him in a proper manner who expect his blessing in the common modes in which he imparts it to men - in the use of those means and efforts which he has appointed, and which he is accustomed to bless. The farmer who should wait for God to plow and sow his fields, would not only be disappointed, but would be guilty of provoking Him. And so the man who waits for God to do what he ought to do; to save him without using any of the means of grace, will not only be disappointed, but will provoke his displeasure."

Barnes' Notes on the Bible.

Other verses:

Psa 130:5-7 (NIV) I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope. **6** I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen

wait for the morning. **7** Israel, put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love and with him is full redemption.

Psa 27:13-14 (NIV) I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. **14** Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.

Isa 30:18 (NIV) Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!