

The Strength of the Lord

The Reward of Those Fully Committed

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2 Chronicles 16:9a (NIV) For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.

I. The Lord is actively watching

God's eye or eyes is a frequent picture of God's providential care. God guides with His eye (Ps. 32:8), that is, gives counsel while offering His watchful care. Deliverance from death and famine result from God's watchful eye (Ps. 33:18-19). The image of God's eye(s) ranging throughout the earth symbolizes God's knowledge of all human activity and His control over it. (2 Chron. 16:9; Prov. 15:3; Jer. 16:17) Apocalyptic pictures involving numerous eyes (Ezek. 1:18; 10:12; Rev. 4:6), likewise, reassure of God's awareness of His people's plight wherever they might be.

—Holman Bible Dictionary

Proverbs 5:21 (NIV) For a man's ways are in full view of the LORD, and he examines all his paths.

Hebrews 4:13 (NIV) Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

1 Peter 3:12 (NIV) For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

II. Empowering, enabling, delivering strength

Psalms 33:16-22 (NIV) No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength.¹⁷ A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength it cannot save.¹⁸ But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love,¹⁹ to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine.²⁰ We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield.²¹ In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name.²² May your unfailing love rest upon us, O LORD, even as we put our hope in you.

2 Chronicles 14:11 (NIV) Then Asa called to the LORD his God and said, "LORD, there is no one like you to help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, O LORD our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this vast army. O LORD, you are our God; do not let man prevail against you."

III. Loyal, wholehearted commitment rewarded

2 Chronicles 16:9 (NKJV) For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of *those* whose **heart is loyal** to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars."

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Hezekiah: 2 Kings 23:3-6 (NIV) Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, ³“Remember, O LORD, how I have walked before you faithfully and with **wholehearted devotion** and have done what is good in your eyes.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly. ⁴Before Isaiah had left the middle court, the word of the LORD came to him: ⁵“Go back and tell Hezekiah, the leader of my people, ‘This is what the LORD, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you. On the third day from now you will go up to the temple of the LORD. ⁶I will add fifteen years to your life. And I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city for my sake and for the sake of my servant David.’”

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego: Daniel 3:14-28 (NIV) and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? ¹⁵Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?”¹⁶Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. ¹⁷If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. ¹⁸But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”¹⁹Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual ²⁰and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. ²¹So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. ²²The king’s command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, ²³and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.²⁴Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, “Weren’t there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?” They replied, “Certainly, O king.”²⁵He said, “Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.”²⁶Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, “Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!” So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, ²⁷and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them.²⁸Then Nebuchadnezzar said, “Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king’s command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.

Widow in Zarephath: 1 Kings 17:10-16 (NIV) So he went to Zarephath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, “Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?” ¹¹As she was going to get it, he called, “And bring me, please, a piece of bread.”¹²“As surely as the LORD your God lives,” she replied, “I don’t have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die.”¹³Elijah said to her, “Don’t be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small cake of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. ¹⁴For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the LORD gives rain on the land.’”¹⁵She went away

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and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. ¹⁶For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the LORD spoken by Elijah.

Another widow: 2 Kings 4:1-7 (NIV) The wife of a man from the company of the prophets cried out to Elisha, “Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he revered the LORD. But now his creditor is coming to take my two boys as his slaves.” ²Elisha replied to her, “How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?” “Your servant has nothing there at all,” she said, “except a little oil.” ³Elisha said, “Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars. Don’t ask for just a few. ⁴Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side.” ⁵She left him and afterward shut the door behind her and her sons. They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring. ⁶When all the jars were full, she said to her son, “Bring me another one.” But he replied, “There is not a jar left.” Then the oil stopped flowing. ⁷She went and told the man of God, and he said, “Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left.”

Martha: John 11:38-44 (NIV) Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. ³⁹“Take away the stone,” he said. “But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.” ⁴⁰Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” ⁴¹So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴²I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.” ⁴³When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” ⁴⁴The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”

Synopsis of King Asa: He began in 911 B.C. and reigned forty-one years. During the first ten years of his reign, the land was at peace. He led the people in a great revival (2 Chron. 14:2-5). He built up and fenced in the cities of Judah (14:6, 7). This peace is suddenly shattered, however, when he is threatened with invasion by a million Ethiopian troops (14:9). Hopelessly outnumbered, Asa cries out to God: *“Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them who have no power: help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee”* (14:11).

God graciously answers this prayer and personally smites the Ethiopians (14:12). Asa returns home and continues his reforms (15:8-15). *“And they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul”* (15:12). The zealous king even deposes Maachah (his grandfather Rehoboam’s wife) because of her idolatry (1 Ki. 15:13).

In the thirty-sixth year of Asa’s reign, the northern king, Baasha, declares war on him and begins building a wall fortress at Ramah to control the road to Judah, thus hoping to cut off all trade to Jerusalem (2 Chron. 16:1). Instead of trusting God, as he did during the Ethiopian threat some years back, Asa bribes the Syrian king to ally with him against Israel (2 Chron. 16:2-6). Asa is severely rebuked for this by the prophet Hanani and warned that he would be plagued with wars from that point on due to his faithlessness. He eloquently reminds the foolish king of past history (2 Chron. 16:8, 9). Hanani then says: *“For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the*

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whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore, from henceforth thou shalt have wars” (16:9).

Asa responds by throwing Hanani in prison (2 Chron. 16:10). He then ended the good reign he began by oppressing the people. Two years prior to his death he became seriously diseased in his feet, but refused to take this problem to God.