

10/25/18

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

“Be strong!” Do you ever get tired of hearing that? Maybe mom and dad were dropping you off at your first day of school or football practice and the advice was: “Be strong.” Maybe it was time to go to the doctor for some serious tests or to the funeral home for some funeral planning and the encouragement you heard was: “Be strong.” Maybe you were going in to face the boss or were about to have a tough conversation with an estranged friend and the advice given to you was: “Be strong.”

The directive, “be strong,” can be quite dangerous for two reasons. On the one hand, we might actually believe we have sufficient strength on our own to do whatever it is that we need to do. This self-reliance can work at times, but ultimately leads us to crash and burn. That’s because we rely on ourselves rather than God. On the other hand, constantly being told to “be strong” can have a demoralizing effect. Maybe we know that we don’t have the strength required for the task and the encouragement to “be strong” leads us to despair and to give up. This is the problem with relying on human strength. It fails and lets us down.

Thankfully, God’s Word goes on to tell us: *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Ephesians 6:1.* On our own, sinful human beings can only fall short of whatever goal we are trying to achieve. But trusting in the Lord and relying on his power, there is nothing that God can’t accomplish for us. Scripture says that all things are possible with God. God’s Word teaches us to lift our eyes off ourselves and our own weaknesses and failings, and to focus on our Savior Jesus.

When we focus on Jesus, we see a Savior who has everything we need. We see One with the power and might to calm storms and to drive out demons and heal diseases. We see One with the wisdom to know exactly what we need and when we need it. We see One with the love to do everything necessary to make sure that we are forgiven and saved, even when that meant going to the cross to die in our place. We see One with the power to rise from the dead and the promise to do the same for us some day.

Each day we can begin with the encouragement—not to “Be strong” in our selves, but to “Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.”

Prayer: *Dear Lord Jesus, forgive me for the times when I rely on myself. Teach me each day to trust in your power and love. Amen.*

(WELS E-Devotion, adapted)

...See you in worship.

Keep looking up because the Lord is always looking down – Psalm 121

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