

Road bridges are never made from wax or sand. Technically, one could design and build a wax bridge that would withstand the weight of a truck, but it would be enormous compared to what we are used to seeing. Wax simply does not have the strength to be a good choice for a bridge building material. Materials with much higher strength are chosen like steel, concrete, wood, or stone. The strength that a material has is defined by its ability to withstand or resist a force. **This type of strength is a passive strength.** Choosing a strong “material” to build with will lead to the desired outcome.

*"Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who **built his house on the sand.** "The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall." (Matthew 7:26-27)*

Hearing God’s Words and acting on them will produce a strong foundation on which to build a house. **But, what is this house we are building?** It is our dwelling, the place we live. Our house is where we return to for shelter, comfort, safety, and warmth. It is where we keep our belongings and where we sleep. Messiah is giving us an analogy that compares our physical house with that of our dwelling with God.

*For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man **builds on the foundation** with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (1 Corinthians 3:11-15)*

If you build your house with wood, hay, and straw, a fire will destroy it. And, if you build it on sand, there will be nothing left of your dwelling after the heavy rains (or the firemen’s hoses) come. By the grace of God, you may survive, but you will be destitute and homeless. Today, homeowners buy insurance to cover such tragedies, but faith is arguably better and cheaper, if you can find it. The passive strength that is required to produce a good level of quality in our construction comes from two places. The primary source is cited above in 1Cor3:11. **Messiah IS our foundation – there is nothing stronger. Not even vibranium.** The secondary source of passive strength that we build with is inside us. We choose where we put our effort and attention. We choose whether to love God and our neighbor or not. We choose to “hear the words of Him and act on them,” or not. We have passive strength in us that we draw from to make these choices. (But there is a bonus built into the system... Our loving God will happily **increase that inner strength – if we ask for it.**)

Sled dogs are strong animals. When 14 or so dogs are teamed together, they can pull 400 pounds across the snow all day long at about 10 miles per hour or more. But, if you cut down a mature oak tree and need to drag the log out of the woods, you would probably not choose sled dogs to do the job. Draught horses or oxen would be a better choice because of the larger animal’s strength. Pulling a heavy weight requires a strength that is defined by its ability to exert or apply a force. This type of strength is an **active strength.** We also need active strength to work with our passive strength. **We need to exert forces as well as resist them.** We are engaged in spiritual warfare and as warriors, we need passive strength to resist and defend. But even with the armor of God, our active strength is needed.

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. **Put on** the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For **our struggle** is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, **take up** the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to **stand firm.** (Ephesians 6:10-13)*

Passive strength is not enough. We cannot wield a sword or hold up a shield without active strength. We cannot wrestle or struggle against “the spiritual forces of wickedness” or stand firm without active strength. We cannot wage the good warfare or launch any offensive attack without active strength.

*This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may **wage the good warfare**, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, (1 Timothy 1:18-19)*

We need active strength to wage this war. And our strength comes from...?

'Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.' (Isaiah 41:10)

There are other types of strength that we are familiar with which are not associated with physical (or spiritual) forces. These are used to describe things like smells and flavors, character and integrity, emotions and opinions, love and generosity, faith, conviction, devotion, courage, pain, endurance, resistance, etc. Putting the word “strong” before any of these nouns has a clear meaning. Some of these strengths we also seek.

I will confess something here to you. I often feel like I am lacking in strength. Sure, the obvious examples come to mind as I have sailed past the half-century milepost in life – like when I watch my kids play soccer and I marvel at how fast they can run and for how long. But I lack strength in more important things that have nothing to do with losing capability with age. On the contrary, I feel that **as I age, I should be gaining strength** in things like resisting temptation or increasing self-control. I really could use some assistance increasing those strengths. And I know that I can find assistance. I know those strengths can be increased.

***Do you not know? Have you not heard?** The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet **those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength**; They will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary. (Isaiah 40:28-31)*

I can answer those questions. Yes, I do know, and yes, I have heard. He is strong and He gives strength. When I lack strength, He increases power. In my middle age, my vigor is waning, yet when I wait for the Eternal, I will gain new strength. I will not become weary. This is a promise that I can benefit from. But what is this correlation between waiting and strength? It is food for thought and maybe a topic for another letter...

I have a comparison for you that links a scripture to a mundane situation in life. Have you ever made scrambled eggs and had a hard time cleaning the pan? For me, it only happens some of the time and I am not sure why. But when it does happen, cleaning the pan reminds me of **the bond strength** shown here:

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)

Nothing can separate us. Dig deep inside yourself for that strength you need to love God, and always know that if you are having a hard time finding it, you have been promised that **if you ask you will receive**.

Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. (Colossians 3:2)

Peace to you and glory to God!

-Nate

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