

# Power to the Faint

Isaiah 40:21—31 (v. 29—31)

## Introduction

(Read **Isaiah 40:29—31**). The older I get, the more meaning this passage has for me. And it's not because I'm losing the strength and stamina I had when I was young. It's because my understanding of it has changed, it has deepened.

## Strength for Service

If you look at the verses ahead of this passage, God is talking about what He does. So, we may think that He is talking about strength for service here. However, on closer inspection, the majesty of God is the focus, how none can compare with Him. He is using examples of His work of creation to prove this. We need God's strength, not just for service, but to keep living, especially when the going gets tough, when the world is against us.

## A Different Type of Strength

So, this is not so much about what God has done as it is who He is. He is *the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, who sits above the circle of the earth* (v. 28, 22). Creator of the physical and material, He also created us as spiritual beings. He is not so concerned about our physical strength as He is our spiritual strength. Young and old are susceptible to spiritual weakness.

## Success Breeds Failure

And the amount of success we have in service doesn't matter when it comes to spiritual success. In fact, many times we see success breeds failure. A good example of this is Elijah. What could have been a greater success than when he saw God defeat 400 prophets of Baal? The people were even so impressed, they seized the prophets and killed them. But hear what happened next (Read **1Kings 19:1—3**). Despite what had just happened, Elijah fled from the queen in fear.

## Strength to Stand

God found Elijah under a broom tree and fed him with heavenly food. In the strength of that food, Elijah took a forty-day hike to Mount Horeb. There, God spoke to him in a still, small voice and renewed Elijah's strength to stand against Jezebel and carry on. His strength was renewed when he waited for the Lord in prayer, fasting, and listening to Him.

## Getting Ahead of God

Jonah was another case. In **chapter one** of the book that bears his name, he ran away from God but was swallowed by a huge fish. There, he was forced to wait for the Lord in prayer in **chapter two**. In **chapter three**, he preached a sermon calling the people of Nineveh to repent. His preaching was a success, the people repented, and God spared the city. But that wasn't what Jonah was hoping for (Read **Jonah 4:1—3**). Instead of waiting for the Lord, Jonah was running ahead of Him, going his own way.

## Handling Temptations

The biggest problem we have is going our own way and running into temptations. In the section on the Sixth Petition of the Lord's Prayer in the **Large Catechism**, Luther says this about being tempted by the flesh, the world, and the devil. *So, every hour that we are in this vile life, we are attacked on all sides, chased, and hunted down. We are moved to cry out and pray that God would not allow us to become weary and faint, and to fall again into sin, shame, and unbelief. For otherwise it is impossible to overcome even the least temptation.* Without God's help, temptations can lead us into unbelief and destroy our salvation.

## Our Waiting Lord

The best example of waiting for the Lord and being renewed in power by the Spirit is Jesus Christ. In our Gospel lesson, Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law and everyone for miles around heard about it. They brought Him all the sick and oppressed by demons from the whole city. He spent the rest of the day ministering to and healing them. *Then, rising early in the morning, while it was still dark, He departed and went out to a desolate place, and there He prayed (Mark 1:35).* When the disciples found Him and told Him everyone was looking for Him, He said, *"Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out" (Mark 1:38).* That's why He came out to pray, to be spiritually revitalized, so he could go and preach other places.

## Waiting for the Lord

As we said, we wait for the Lord in prayer and fasting. But we also wait for Him and are renewed when we spend time in His Word. And we wait for Him in the Sacrament of the Altar. There He comes to us and strengthens our faith, giving **POWER TO THE FAINT**.

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*And the peace of God,  
Which surpasses all understanding,  
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

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