**STRENGTH**

**(Key verses: Deuteronomy 33:24-25)**

Anyone needing encouragement will certainly find it in the closing words of this small section of Scripture, and in fact in the whole of Deuteronomy chapter 33. This chapter contains the blessing Moses gave to the Children of Israel before his death (verse 1) and all these blessings are ours today through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 1:20). What is the message of these verses for ourselves?

**1. We learn that as Christians, as believers, as children of God, we are travellers on a journey.**

This journey begins on earth and ends in heaven, though of course it never really ends! It begins at conversion, and so far as this earthly life is concerned it concludes either at death or at the second coming of the Lord Jesus. Within the context of Psalm 23 the journey begins in verse 1 and ends in verse 6.

In the New Testament this idea of the Christian life being a journey is clearly taught, for Christians are described as pilgrims who are passing through this earthly scene (Hebrews 11:13; 1 Peter 2:11).

**2. We learn that as Christians our journey is over very rough country.**

The people to whom God made this promise had rocky, flinty mountain roads to negotiate. Leather shoes would have been useless because they would have worn out at once and their feet would have suffered, so the Lord graciously provided shoes made of iron and brass.

We as Christians are travelling on a rough road; the Lord has wonderfully blessed us by saving us (Hebrews 7:25); by giving us eternal life (1 John 5:11-12); by making us citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20); but the journey to heaven is a rough one. We constantly experience trials and testings, and God has never promised that it would be different - look up and compare Psalm 34:19; John 16:33; Philippians 1:29; 1 Peter 4:12. Perhaps you are experiencing the roughness of the way now? If so, this is part of the journey prescribed for you by the Lord Himself.

**3. We learn that we only travel a step at a time, in fact a day at a time.**

The Lord promises shoes of iron and brass for the rough roads – and shoes speak of walking. His promise at the end of verse 25 is an encouragement – “Your strength will equal your days.” It’s a mercy that we only live a day at a time because if we knew all that is in store for us in the remaining days of this year, next year, and the years that follow, the burden would be intolerable. Immense fears would grip us and we would be filled with apprehension. So on the rough journey of life we, who are Christians, have to learn to go a step at a time and to live a day at a time. We must not try to look into the distant future but we must endeavour to do what Jesus exhorts us to do: “Do not worry about tomorrow” (Matthew 6:34). In other words, don’t be anxious because tomorrow will have worries and anxieties of its own. The journey we take is a slow one, even if we are inclined to think that time flies because we are busy! But the promise is for all needed strength. What an encouragement! What a promise!

**4. We learn that on the journey to heaven God’s strength is supplied to match each and every demand. If the burdens are heavier then the supply of grace will be greater (2 Corinthians 12:9).**

With reference to the King James Version of verse 25 (”As thy days, so shall thy strength be”), the 19th century preacher Alexander Maclaren has written, “The two sums of ’thy days’ and thy strength’ keep growing side by side, the one as fast as the other, and no faster.” In other words, if the days increase, so will the strength. But notice this fact: this guarantee of sufficient strength to support us is applicable in three areas:-

1. 1. ***In our home and family life.*** There is reference to this in verse 24. What demands are made upon those whose main task is to be in the home – perhaps the mother or maybe the father! What does God say to those who are feeling the pressure in their domestic world? ”Your strength will equal your days.”
2. 2. ***In our church life.*** This is referred to in verse 24 – “Let (Asher) be favoured by his brothers.” How can I as a Christian be a help to my brothers and sisters in Christ with whom I have fellowship and with whom I engage in Christian service? Where can I gain strength for this, to be a dedicated, Spirit-filled, and therefore a humble, kind and loving Christian? The Lord says, “Your strength will equal your days.”
3. 3. ***In our daily walk.*** The words in verse 24  – “Let (Asher) bathe his feet in oil” refers to the process of extracting oil from the olives by foot presses, by treading out the oil. This was hard work. Where did those who engaged in it find the strength? The Lord says, ”Your strength will equal your days.”

How wonderful the Lord’s promise is, and how sufficient His strength will be for every demand that is made upon us! But of course we must appropriate that strength as it is offered to us by the Lord and in the Person of the Holy Spirit, who lives within us if we are true believers - look up and compare Zechariah 4:6; John 14:16-17; 2 Corinthians 3:5-6