

# UnCommon Strength

**Synopsis:** God wants you to have an uncommon strength, so the problems and the pressure you face in life are ultimately tools in his hands that he allows so that, after enduring the trial, you'll emerge stronger!

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I asked the crowd last week, *how many of you want to make a difference?* Pretty much everybody does! This week's question is this:

***How many of you want to be stronger?***

Last week, we started a series about developing an **uncommon life** - a life of faith, a Christ-like life. And we talked first about how it all begins with an *uncommon knowledge*, the gospel. It all starts with knowing the good news about Jesus.

Today, we're reading further in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians about how God developed in Paul and his companions an **uncommon strength**.

What does it mean to be **strong** in life?

- It means I keep my head when all around me is chaos.
- It means I hang onto hope even in a season of loss and pain.
- It means I retain confidence even in the face of criticism.
- It means I stand by biblical values against the current of cultural change.

You know **strong** people. They're people who have endured. People who have walked through suffering and retained their character and confidence.

**God wants you to grow in you an uncommon strength that lasts forever!**

And we all want that, right? An uncommon strength? The problem is...

**We get stronger when we learn how to cling to our faith in seasons of trial and suffering. No pain, no gain.**

The Apostle Paul was a **strong** man. Let's read about what made him so...

## 2 Corinthians 4:8-18 NLT

<sup>8</sup> We are **pressed** on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are **perplexed**, but not driven to despair. <sup>9</sup> We are **hunted down**, but never abandoned by God. We get **knocked down**, but we are not destroyed. <sup>10</sup> Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies.

<sup>11</sup> Yes, we live under constant **danger** of death because we serve Jesus, so that the life of Jesus will be evident in our dying bodies. <sup>12</sup> So we live in the face of death, but this has resulted in eternal life for you.

<sup>13</sup> **But we continue** to preach because we have the same kind of faith the psalmist had when he said, "I believed in God, so I spoke." <sup>14</sup> **We know** that God, who raised the Lord Jesus, will also raise us with Jesus and present us to himself together with you. <sup>15</sup> All of this is for your benefit. And as God's grace reaches more and more people, there will be great thanksgiving, and God will receive more and more glory.

<sup>16</sup> That is why **we never give up**. Though our **bodies are dying**, our **spirits are being renewed every day**. <sup>17</sup> For our **present troubles are small** and won't last very long. Yet **they produce for us a glory** that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! <sup>18</sup> So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, **we fix our gaze** on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but **the things we cannot see will last forever**.

Paul uses these phrases to describe the situations he'd suffered...

- Pressed!
- Perplexed!
- Hunted down!
- Knocked down!

Have you been there? When the pressure is on? When the stress is high? When unfair criticism comes and unexpected news hits?

The phrase Paul utters in response to it all is absolutely key...

***"But we continue!!"***

## The key to developing uncommon strength is to keep going and keep growing *in spite of the pain and pressure.*

How do you do that? Paul explains how he got through it all, and it was all about **focus**. It was what he decided to concentrate on.

### 1. Focus on how God's grace can be on display.

He said, *"And as God's grace reaches more and more people, there will be great thanksgiving, and God will receive more and more glory."*

What's happening in your life in this moment is just a small piece of what God is doing to put his grace on display for eternity's sake. Remember what Paul said in the last passage...

#### 2 Corinthians 4:7 NLT

We now have this light shining in our hearts, but **we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure**. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.

### 2. Focus on God is growing you up on the inside.

Paul said, *"Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day!!"*

So I've been working out a little bit with a friend. We've been lifting some weights. And I've been fascinated at how it all works. You can lift weights for less than half an hour, three or four times per week, and you get stronger and stronger.

But it's **how** you get stronger that fascinates me. Your muscles don't actually grow *during* a workout. They grow *after* the workout. When your muscles encounter strong resistance, they suffer from micro-tearing. When you're done working out, the muscles start repairing themselves and it's during that *repair* process that muscles actually *grow* and *get stronger*.

### 3. Focus on the goal God has for you - enjoying him forever!

Paul said, *“For our present troubles are small and won’t last very long... So we don’t look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.”*

I love this phrase from Paul the most...

***That is why we never give up!!!***

God isn’t finished.

You don’t have the whole story yet.

**Don’t look at your problems. Look past your problems!**

The question is this... **do you want what God wants for you?**

Do you want comfort now? Or strength for all time?