

The World's Strongest Man

Psalm 32

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Who holds the title for the “World’s Strongest Man?” Perhaps it was George Oelesen from Denmark. He holds 14 Guinness Book of World Records.

Olsen was so strong; he was able to deadlift more than 1,000 pounds and pull a bus, single-handedly. He once let his girlfriend walk over his stomach... while she was riding a 9,000-pound elephant!

Maybe the most spectacular stunt of all was when he held a helicopter to the ground, as its whirring blades tried desperately to lift the aircraft.

That got him a spot in a James Bond movie making him even more famous among the world’s body-building fans.

People who knew Oelesen, however, don’t talk only of his weight-lifting feats when they talk about him. Instead, they talk of his humility, and the way he gently fathered his young son.

At one time, Georgia’s Paul Anderson was the undisputed world’s strongest man. He, too, collected amazing weight-lifting records. In his prime, he was undefeated and the holder of eight world records.

He once lifted 6,270 pounds with his back! That’s the equivalent of two mid-sized cars!

But his real strength was in the way he changed lives. He spoke about his faith in Jesus Christ around the country, and his home for troubled boys became famous across America.

Those boys found Anderson to be not only strong physically, but emotionally and spiritually. Hundreds of them left as changed young men.

The Bible teaches that any man can find strength to put him at the top of the stack, and that it's every man's personal responsibility to be a man of incredible strength.

Unfortunately though, from 1990 to 2000, the number of women raising children alone rose 25 percent? The number of couples living together without being married was up 71 percent.

We desperately need men committed to God, who'll follow godly principles as they lead their families and their communities. If you need an example, the Bible's filled with great men.

Possibly none more famous than David. At times, it looked like David had it all together. He was a war hero by the time he was a teenager. He was fearless in battle and country-boy strong.

He was outspoken and charismatic. He was a natural leader, the kind of man other men longed to be around. He was also unafraid of emotion; he even wept in public.

But there was a time when David missed the mark. He made the greatest mistake of his life, but he was strong enough to admit it and to ask God for forgiveness.

In fact, one of his psalms is a good place for us to consider the strength of the world's strongest man.

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Spiritually, if you're going to be one of God's strongest men, you've got to start with your weakest spot. You've got to start with your own sin.

Before you can move to any area of strength, you've got to start with a recognition of sin, of weakness, of things you've done wrong.

Listen to Psalm 32:1-2, *"Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit."*

How does forgiveness come about? By confession! David was recounting a time when he had sinned against God and tried to ignore that sin and its consequences.

Listen to what he said in Psalm 32:3-4, *"When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer."*

David said, *"My strength was sapped as in the heat of summer."* You can probably relate, especially living here in Texas.

Maybe you were working in a garden, mowing the lawn, or working on your house and when that summer sun came up, it sapped your strength. Taking the moisture from every pore of your body.

But it wasn't the sun that made David weak. It was his sin. One of the most important secrets to discovering David's strength is to see how quickly he admitted his own weakness.

David was strong enough to see that some of his choices had hurt him far worse than any of his enemies, but David was also wise enough to see that most of his problems were his own fault.

So, instead of ignoring the problem, as he sometimes tried to do, David pulled up his bootstraps, fell down on his knees, and told God he wanted to be strong again.

Watch what he said in Psalm 32:5, *“Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD”--and you forgave the guilt of my sin.”*

If you want to be the world’s strongest man, you’ve got to start with your own weakness; your own trouble spots.

James 5:16, *“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”*

Admitting your weakness in a biblical way is the first step in becoming the world’s strongest man. You just can’t skip it.

1 John 1:9-10, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.”*

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The world’s strongest men also find their greatest strength on their knees.

Psalm 32:6-7, *“Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found; surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him. You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.”*

I love the story of the small boy who was asked if he ever prayed. He said, *“Sometimes I pray, but sometimes I just say my prayers.”* What a distinction! Do you really pray, or do you just say your prayers?

Before Jim Cymbala was famous as an author and pastor of the Brooklyn Tabernacle Church in New York City, he was just a man struggling with the difference of praying and just saying his prayers.

Jim and Carol's 16-year-old daughter moved rapidly from being a model child to suddenly being a rebellious, sinful young woman.

She was infatuated with a godless young man and ended up moving out of their home, and into his. After a while, she became pregnant.

Jim didn't share his needs with his church, after all he was the pastor. He ministered to people with real needs.

Some of them lived amidst violence. Some lived in the ghetto and many were the only Christians in their homes.

At a Tuesday night prayer meeting an usher passed him a note from a young woman in the church who was a spiritual person.

She told him that the meeting should stop and that the church should pray for his daughter.

This is where a man really struggles. Do we admit our weaknesses to one another? Do we really open up our emotional scars before the church?

He prayed in almost a panic, wanting to know if God was in the prayer request. It would be the first time the church had ever openly prayed for the pastor's secret need.

When Jim went home that evening he told his wife about what happened. *"You had to be there. I just know that when we went to the throne of grace, something happened in the heavenly places."*

Thirty six hours later, his daughter shows up on their door step and told them, *"I was sleeping when God woke me up in the middle of the night, and he showed me I was heading toward this pit, this chasm, and I got so afraid. I saw myself for what I am. But then God showed me He hadn't given up on me."*

She and her daughter moved home with Jim and Carol. She was restored spiritually, physically, and emotionally.

She married a godly man and Jim found that what he preached to be true was true. The greatest strength you'll ever find is on your knees.

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The world's strongest men seek God's way, and courageously follow it.

Psalm 32:8-11, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you. Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you. Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORD's unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him. Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!"

Becoming the strongest man you can be requires two things. First, you must seek God's way.

You must find God's instruction, be in church, be into Bible study. Get in with the small groups, starting with Sunday School, then continue on to other small groups.

You must dig deeper, as if you were a body builder training for Olympic competition, filling your mind with God's instruction.

The second part? Once you know the instruction of God, follow it. God's way is the only way on your quest to be the world's strongest man.

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Conclusion

Anthony Clark is another bodybuilder who garnered the title, "*The World's Strongest Man.*"

Anthony was destined to be strong, right from his amazing days in high school when he shot to the top of his athletic pack.

The only problem? Anthony's dad was an abusive, hateful man. Anthony wanted nothing more as a little boy than to just hear his dad's praise.

In high school, Anthony once scored four touchdowns in a single game, but his parents weren't in the stands.

When he got home, he thought, *"Surely this game will make my dad proud."*

Instead, his dad tied his hands behind his back, hung him from a rafter, and beat him with an extension cord until he passed out.

In the next few months, he tried to take his life three times. The father left home, and all hope seemed to be gone.

Then someone sponsored an assembly at Anthony's school. There was entertainment, but at the end of the show, a speaker talked about having an inner strength in life.

After this everyone was invited back for pizza that night. Anthony said, *"Everybody was going for the pizza, but I was going for the message, and I knew something was going to happen."*

"But I didn't know what he was talking about, when he said he knew a father could love you unconditionally. He talked about a girl named Susan that had taken her life because no one said: 'Hey, I love you.'"

I thought, *"He's talking to me,"* and later that night he said, *"If you make Jesus Christ your Lord and Savior, you shall have eternal life."*

He quoted John 3:16: *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son."*

I thought, *"How can a father do that? That night I gave my life to the Lord and everything changed for me."*

Anthony Clark traveled the country telling people his story. He told them that no, his father never reconciled with him or became the dad he so desperately needed.

Instead, Anthony told people about the God who gave him unconditional love and the ability to become far stronger than he ever imagined.

Do you want to have the same strength? Admit your weaknesses. We're all sinners and the Bible says we must ask God for forgiveness.

This is why we need to discover the power of prayer because God actually listens when we speak to him.

Then, when you see the instructions of God, follow them. Don't depart from them and soon you'll be one of the world's strongest men.