

The Source of Strength

My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Psalms 73:26 NRSV

When I was in Junior High, I spent a whole summer reading some of the stories of Greek mythology. I hadn't thought much about that time until recently when I ran across one of the stories about Hercules. Hercules just happened to be one of my favorite subjects of the myths. According to the myths, Hercules was the hero son of Zeus, the king of the gods, and Alcmene, a mortal woman. The story I recently rediscovered was the tale of a wrestling match between Hercules and Antaeus, who was the giant son of Poseidon, the god of the sea, and Gaia, who was the personification of Earth. Perhaps that's the origin of the term "mother earth" but I digress.

Early in the story it appeared that Antaeus had the upper-hand, but as they wrestled, Hercules noticed something important. Each time Hercules threw Antaeus to the earth, the giant rose up stronger than before. As it turned out, Antaeus gained strength whenever he was thrown into the arms of his mother. Hercules quickly changed his tactics when he realized the source of Antaeus' strength. Rather than throw his opponent to the earth, Hercules lifted him to the sky as far from the earth as possible to diminish the strength of Antaeus.

Rereading the story, it occurs to me that Greek mythology has twisted what I know to be the truth. Jesus, my "hero", points me heavenward to give me strength, because the things of this world often pound away at me, sapping my strength. Even so, I wonder how often we are tempted to seek our strength from earthly things rather than from the true source of strength, power and wisdom. We are tempted by earthly things because it seems to be the obvious choice, it seems more expedient, and it seems like it is the easier choice and therefore the right choice.

Jesus never said that it would be easy to follow him. He did promise that if we listen to him and follow his commands, that our life will be strengthened with meaning and purpose; that our life will be grounded by goodness and grace. Jesus gives us a life of strength that points us heavenward and shows us the way to the Father.

Sometimes we reread the folly of an old myth, and find the truth and the source of our life, and of our strength. Jesus, whose power is from the One true God, has already wrestled with earthly things and won the battle for us. Let us point our lives toward Jesus and find strength in His power and might.

Christ's love and strength, be with you,

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