

Zechariah 12:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the LORD of hosts their God.

Analysis

And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the LORD of hosts their God. This verse presents remarkable unity between rural Judah ("governors") and urban Jerusalem ("inhabitants"). The **"governors of Judah"** (alufey Yehudah, אֲלֻפֵּי יְהוּדָה) are clan chiefs or leaders of Judah's territory outside Jerusalem. They recognize that **"the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength"** (amtzah li yoshvey Yerushalaim)—the city dwellers become a source of strength for the countryside.

Significantly, they say this **"in their heart"** (belibam)—internal, genuine conviction, not mere public declaration. The basis of Jerusalem's strength: **"in the LORD of hosts their God"** (ba-YHWH Tzeva'ot Elohehem). The strength isn't inherent human ability but God's presence with Jerusalem's inhabitants. "LORD of hosts" emphasizes divine military power—the God who commands heavenly armies dwells with Jerusalem, making them formidable.

This verse reverses historical tensions between Jerusalem and rural Judah. Often jealousy, political rivalry, or economic disparity divided city and countryside (compare Rehoboam's split kingdom, 1 Kings 12). But in the eschatological deliverance, unity replaces division. Judah's leaders don't resent Jerusalem's prominence; instead, they rejoice in it, recognizing that God's blessing on Jerusalem benefits all Judah. The verse teaches that God's people find strength not in isolation but in recognizing God's work in one another.

Historical Context

Post-exilic Judah was small, weak, and divided. Jerusalem lay in ruins; rural areas faced poverty and discouragement. Tensions between returnees and those who remained in the land created friction (Ezra 4). Zechariah prophesies future unity: rural and urban Jews will recognize their common dependence on God and mutual benefit from His presence. The New Testament develops this: the church is one body with many members (1 Corinthians 12:12-27); believers scattered geographically remain united in Christ; strength comes not from competition but from recognizing God's work throughout the body. Acts portrays Jerusalem church as source of strength for scattered believers—apostles sent from Jerusalem to Samaria (Acts 8:14), Antioch (Acts 11:22), and Paul's missions received Jerusalem's affirmation (Acts 15). Yet this wasn't hierarchical control but mutual strengthening in the Lord. Eschatologically, when Christ returns and establishes His kingdom with Jerusalem as capital, all God's people will rejoice in Zion's glory (Isaiah 60-62), recognizing that God's blessing on one benefits all.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does this verse challenge competitive or divisive attitudes within the church, calling us to rejoice in God's work among all His people?
2. What does it mean to find strength in the LORD working through other believers rather than relying solely on personal faith?
3. In what ways should Christians view spiritual leaders and churches whom God blesses as sources of mutual strength rather than rivals?

Interlinear Text

וְאָמַר ו	אֶלֶּי י	יְהוּדָה	בְּלִבָּם	אֶמְצָה	לִי
shall say	And the governors	of Judah	in their heart	shall be my strength	H0
H559	H441	H3063	H3820	H556	
יֹשְׁבֵי י	יְרוּשָׁלַיִם	בְּיְהוָה	צָבָא וְ	אֱלֹהֵיהֶם:	
The inhabitants	of Jerusalem	in the LORD	of hosts	their God	
H3427	H3389	H3068	H6635	H430	

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 18:32 (References God): It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect.

Zechariah 10:12 (References Lord): And I will strengthen them in the LORD; and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the LORD.

Joel 3:16 (References Lord): The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.

Isaiah 28:6 (Parallel theme): And for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate.

Psalms 18:39 (Parallel theme): For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle: thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me.

Psalms 144:1 (References Lord): Blessed be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight: