

Inner Spiritual Strength

In his *Universal Prayer*, Gurudev Swāmī Śivānandajī prays for inner spiritual strength to resist temptations and to control the mind. Inner spiritual strength is one of the characteristics we see in a truly spiritual person. It comes about when we are able to align ourselves with the Divine. Weakness comes from a feeling of separation, of no real connection with either the Divine or the world around us.

What is inner spiritual strength? It is something that really cannot be described, but it is a strength that we can see in others and subtly feel in ourselves. It is what Gurudev meant by character. Good character is a strength that makes us reliable. People know what to expect from us; they can count on us.

The Divine is both within and without, and Gurudev prays for inner spiritual strength to resist temptations and to control the mind. He is speaking about a spiritual strength in our outer life and a spiritual strength in our inner life. And although the strength is similar, there are two different approaches that we must use.

To find inner spiritual strength within, the only way is through surrender. We have to let go of our sense of separation, turn our life over to the Divine and let Him have the final responsibility. Or we have to recognize that we are That. We are not just a little individual, we are the entire universe. Thus we can use either a *jñāni* approach or a *bhakta's* approach. It will give us inner spiritual strength.

Inner spiritual strength within will give us the power to control the mind, but what about outer spiritual strength to resist temptations? Actually, the practice is in the result that we are seeking. If we want inner spiritual strength for our outer activities, then we must constantly practice resisting temptations. We must constantly practice doing what is right, choosing the good over the pleasant as Lord Yama told Naciketas.

Thus inner spiritual strength must be cultivated in both our inner life and our outer life. In our inner life either through connecting ourselves to God by surrender or by affirmation. In our outer life by constantly resisting temptation and doing what is right—choosing the good over the pleasant.