

Good morning.

After weeks of fevered speculation and intense pressure, the end was dignified. *I believe it is in the best interest of my party and the country for me to stand down and to focus solely on fulfilling my duties as President for the remainder of my term.* And with that Joe Biden has pulled out of the presidential election.

That short announcement brings to an end one of the great political careers. Joe Biden has offered to his nation over 50 years of public service. During the course of his career he has faced huge challenges: a serious stutter, complex brain surgery and worst of all, the death of his son. Whatever view anyone takes of his politics, he is a man of determination and strength.

It has been interesting to see how strength has become the key word in this US election campaign. It is often assumed that strength is about the capacity to hang on at all costs. Strength is the hero who fights on alone. Strength is the Spartan warrior who would rather be carried out on their shield than cede the battle. Strength is the boxer who, like Apollo Creed in the Rocky films, prefers to die in the ring rather than accept that he is past his best.

But yesterday we saw another sort of strength, the strength of character to know when to step aside and let someone else take over.

In the Old Testament, the Prophet Elijah was a man of great strength and faithfulness. He denounced the wicked king Ahab, he saw off the prophets of Baal who denied the God of Israel, he carried on believing even in the face of appalling suffering and isolation. But Elijah also knew when his ministry had run its course. And so at the right time, he passed on his mantle to Elisha who could continue the work. Elijah had the strength to know that the priority was not his own role, but the work of God.

It is easy for anyone to hang on to a job for too long. A role can become so much part of a person's identity that they find it impossible to let go. But as Elijah demonstrates, what matters is not personal legacy but a vision of the common good that goes beyond an individual.

Strength is not just about tenacity and resilience. It is also about the good judgement that knows when, for the greater good, it's time to step aside and let someone else take over. In a long career, maybe yesterday was Joe Biden's greatest act of strength.