

Strong against the Darkness Ephesians 6:10-12

Introduction

NJFK—How do you fight the darkness? Turn on a light!

Paul has been talking about what being filled with the Spirit looks like in our worship together in the church, in our families—wife, husband, children, and in our workplace—slaves and masters. What follows is another way of calling us to live our lives in the power of the Lord. Not just because of our relationships to other human beings, but because of our battle against evil spirit beings who hold sway in this world at many levels.

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. **11** Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. **12** For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

1. The Strength We Need (10-11)
2. The Evil We Face (12)

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Be strong—be empowered (*endunamousthe*)
Used of miraculous power and ability

In the Lord

In the strength (*kratos*) of his might (*isxuos*)
The first term speaks of rule or domination
The second of personal strength

This pile-up of terms points to how high and extensive this power is. It's only to be found in the Lord.

Paul uses the same three terms to describe the power of God to raise Jesus from the dead in Ephesians 1:18-21

18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, **19** and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might (literally, the might of his strength) **20** that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, **21** far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and

above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

The whole armor—panoply—of God

All the battle gear God supplies you—you will need each part. In the verses that follow Paul identifies the pieces that battle gear includes. It is not manmade armor. It's from God.

Able to stand—have the power to stand against (withstand)

The schemes (methodeias—scheming, craftiness) of the devil (slanderer)

John Stott: Satan is a “bully and a beguiler,” using “force and fraud.”

We should not fear the devil nor ignore him, but stand strong against him in the Lord's strength. What follows is not a call for us to cower in fear before the devil and his demons, but to make sure we find our strength not in naïve self-confidence, but in the Lord, who gives us the power and the equipment to stand strong against the devil and his demons.

If you are a born-again Christian, you are not on your own in this life. You are not master of your fate, nor are you self-sufficient, nor are you forsaken. You belong to God through

Christ, and His strength is yours if you will rely on it. His strength is made perfect in weakness.

2 Corinthians 12:9

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Applications

- When are you most likely or least likely to rely on yourself instead of on God?
- What are ways you are relying on God and the strength and battle equipment He supplies you?
- What do you need to change given what these verses reveal?

2. The Evil We Face (12)

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Wrestle—hand-to-hand combat

Flesh and blood—human opponents

The believers in Ephesus were well aware of the power of demonic beings. Many of them had been saved out of occult practices that

involved the worship of Satan and his demons. Some of them had been demon possessed themselves.

Acts 19:11-20

11 And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, **12** so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them. **13** Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims." **14** Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. **15** But the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?" **16** And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. **17** And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled. **18** Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. **19** And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand

pieces of silver. **20** So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.

Rulers, Authorities—used elsewhere for ranks of angels

Cosmic powers (cosmokrator) over this present darkness—term used by the pagan nations to refer to the control of astrological planets over the fate of human beings.

Spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places—in the spiritual realm, not just the physical or material

Applications

- If you consider the spiritual war going on behind the scenes of the conflicts and challenges of your life, in what ways would this passage modify your strategies of coping with them?
- Considering that behind human politics rages a cosmic spiritual battle, what God-given resources should you be using and what God-defined priorities should you be pursuing?

Conclusion

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