

Ephesians 6:10-13
"Be Strong In The Lord"

From the *wealth*, to the *walk*, to the *warfare* of the believer. That's the progression that Paul makes throughout the book of Ephesians. He establishes us in the overwhelming *resources* we have *in* Christ, how it is we're to *respond* to Christ, then before he signs off he doesn't leave us ignorant the powerful *rival* that engages us once you come to *know* Christ.

It generally doesn't take too long before every believer discovers that life in Christ isn't a playground, it's a battleground, & the enemy he faces is much stronger than he is—apart from Christ. But we thank God that greater is He who is in *you* (1 Jn 4:4) (the Holy Spirit of God, Christ in you the hope of glory) than he who is in the world, amen?

But don't be deceived child of God, you are in a war. It's not just in Iraq, or wherever oppressors spring up physically, it's all around you spiritually. But God doesn't enlist you w/out equipping you that you might walk in victory, & that's what Paul draws our attention to in this final section of scripture.

& To me it's no coincidence that right after Paul exhorts us to be being continually filled w/the Spirit of God, to be submitting to one another maintaining a "team" mentality, being careful to honor the roles that make for unity/harmony w/in our families that he moves immediately into the reality of spiritual warfare.

Dad, make no mistake. Mom; make no mistake, Satan wants to dismantle your family. He wants to destroy your life, ruin your witness, rob you of godly influence in your children's lives & if he can tear the influence of a godly father away from his children he'll do it w/out a 2nd thought. Listen to me, Satan is not your friend. He's not the guy who's on your side, wanting you to have fun & God is the giant killjoy in the sky. Satan is a liar & a thief, & he'll do whatever he needs to do to try & drag you &/or your family straight to hell. & If he can't get *you*, fine. He'll be glad to take your kids. Don't be ignorant of your enemy's devices, stand & fight for your family, for God's glory, it will make a difference eternally.

So let's not envision the devil out there in the clubs or in the drug culture (he's already won those areas). He went to bed early last night, so he'd be up in time for church (do you understand what I'm saying?) The battle takes place where the word of God is being sown into the heart. When you find a place that is giving out God's word, you can count on the enemy being there doing everything he can to destroy that work. Seeking to snatch the seed of God's word from the hearts of the hearers (Mk 4).

That is the place the Devil wants to destroy. He doesn't want you nor your church to be fruitful in seeing lives changed to the glory of God. He'd rather you just go to sleep spiritually & let someone else worry about the matters of eternity. But that's not God's call upon your life. In Christ we never back down, we never retreat, & we never surrender. Notice.

Vs 10-13

Once God *enlists* you (which is what happens the moment you're born again) He *equips* you, but it's up to you to do access the equipment. We've got to "take up" the whole armor of God, not parts of it, not pieces of it, "the whole" of it.

Listen, here's what we need to understand here. We can have a tendency to look upon spiritual warfare as an occasional skirmish, or may be an intense intermittent struggle that takes place along the "business as usual" highway of life. Perhaps if we sign up for a missions trip, or get involved in ministry, we expect some kind of satanic resistance. **When we're back home, or no longer serving we just return to normal everyday life. But what Paul is informing us of here is that we're on active duty 24/7. We've been put on notice that our "normal, everyday life" be it at home, at work or wherever we are, are themselves the spiritual battleground. The enemy is constantly engaging you, somehow strategizing or plotting against you. It never ends. Oh it *will* end, one day, but not until you see Jesus face to face.**

Satan wants you to think that you're just cruising through life, things flare up now & then but for the most part there's nothing to worry about. Meanwhile he's actively, strategically, constantly maneuvering his troops against you that he might destroy your life (be it physically, spiritually or both if he can get it).

That's what he's talking about when he says, "For we do not 'wrestle' against flesh & blood, but against principalities, powers, rulers of darkness," so on & so forth. He's not changing metaphors taking you into a gymnasium or the Olympic arena. He's describing the hand to hand combat of a soldier against his enemies. As a follower of Christ, you are constantly engaged in up close & personal combat w/the demonic hierarchy of the devil. If you've committed your life to Christ, then the combat has ensued. Because by the nature of who you are you're declaring the victory of J.C. over Satan & over areas that he's yet to relinquish. So it's his agenda to send his demonic hoards to wrestle against you to knock you down & take you out. Which is why Paul exhorts us in Vs 10 (let's look at it together).

Vs 10

I love the fact that this final section of scripture begins w/the exhortation; “Be *strong* in the Lord.” Because the trend today (it seems) is to try & “sissify” the saints. So many Christians moaning & groaning about their situation because their lives are centered on how *they* are doing, how *they* are feeling, how *they* have been treated.

But do you understand that’s exactly what the bible points out as the problem? When we start centering on ourselves it only goes downhill from there. “You’ve got to learn to love yourself” we’re told. The bible says that’s the problem, we love ourselves, we’re too focused on self when we’re called to die to self & focus on others.

Perhaps you remember the scene, there they were, the children of Israel had mourned the death of Moses, they were ready to move into the Land that God had Promised them. But again it wasn’t going to be a playground, it was going to be a battleground. There were giants in the land, they looked like grasshoppers comparatively, the warfare would be fierce & their enemies weren’t about to give up their ground voluntarily... So 3xs in the 1st 9 Vs of the book of Joshua God says to him, “Be *strong & of good courage.*” “Hey, you’re up to bat Joshua. You can’t afford to become introspective or self-centered, now’s not the time to see a counselor in order to sort out your feelings. You’ve got a few million people looking *to* you, they’re counting *on* you, fight the good *fight.*” Later on in the Ch (Vs 17-18) the people exhorted him in the same way. They said, “We will heed you in everything you say just as we heeded Moses in everything he said. Only be strong & of good courage.”

Listen family, I know it’s the popular thing to go see a counselor & sort out your emotions. & I have no doubt that there are times when a godly counselor can bring clarity where there’s been confusion. But be careful getting too focused on yourself, be strong in the Lord & in the power of *His* might. We all know *you* can’t do it, it’s certainly true that *I* can’t do it. Isn’t that what Jesus said? He said, “*I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.*”¹ We’re never encouraged nor exhorted to suck it up in our own strength. Be strong *in the Lord*, in the power of *His* might. As Paul would write to the Philippians, “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*”² Be *strong* in the Lord...

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Jn 15:5]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Php 4:13]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

More literally Paul wrote, “Strengthen yourself in the Lord.” It wouldn’t surprise me to learn that Paul was thinking of the scene in 1st Samuel 30 when he wrote this. (Rather than explain it, let’s just look quickly at it. **1 Sam 30** Vs 1-9).

Again, no time to turn introspective, he was up to bat, the enemy had ransacked the city in which was he & his men’s family. The people were upset thinking he’d led them foolishly & were considering stoning him to death for what had happened. So what did David do? He strengthened himself in the Lord & rose to the occasion. He led his men to pursue their families, overcame the enemy & enjoyed a great victory. But he had to be strong.

I’m hanging out on this because I believe it’s lacking in large measure in the body of Christ today. Paul presents 2 essential components of victorious spiritual warfare in these 1st couple Vs. 1st of all we have to be strong in the Lord & in the power of His might. 2^{ndly} we have to put on the *whole* armor of God. **Now we hear occasionally about the 2nd, but we rarely have emphasis placed upon the 1st. If you take a weak, anemic soldier & put the very best battle gear on him (but he can barely stand), he’s still going to be an ineffective soldier. He’ll be taken out quickly. So the equipping for the battle begins by being made strong (in the Lord).**

There are reasons soldiers go through basic training in this country. & One reason is to ensure that they’re fit physically. The military in essence says, “We’re going to give you the best weapons, the best gear possible. But it’s imperative that we know that you’re strong physically & capable of using your equipment skillfully.”

God wants you to be strong spiritually, to understand your capacity in the Lord. This word “might” speaks of an inherent power or force, it’s the reserve of strength. You see man who’s all shredded (muscle everywhere), that’s a display of his might. It’s the reserve of his strength even he’s not using it. “Power” speaks of the exercise of that might, he lifts a car, pulls a train, some incredible feat of strength, that reserve of strength is placed into operation.

God has vast reservoirs of might, that can be realized as power in your life. But it’s not going to work in me as I sit by passively. His might works in me as I serve Him actively. If I’m not doing anything, there’s no power at work (does that make sense?) & It’s not me doing what I can & God takes over from there, it’s me relying on His might to move in power through me by faith. I trust the Lord & place my hand to the plow.

Vs 11

In Vs 10 we're told we need to be strong. In Vs 11 we're told why. Because (as mentioned) this life isn't a playground, it's a battleground. Why are so many so weak in the church? They're not armed for battle.

Men don't go to war dressed in P.J.'s ready for pillow fights☺. They're outfitted in fatigues (battledress) & are equipped for combat! Even so, Paul wants us to wake up to the reality of what's going on around us & to be outfitted in the appropriate components necessary to win the war. "Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles (the scheming strategies) of the devil." The words "Put on" are imperative, the idea is to be suited up w/urgency. The battle isn't coming, it's here!

If Satan (or his cohorts) see a piece of armor missing from your life, guess where the attack is coming? Now we're going to talk about the armor (God willing next week), but before we do you get a briefing on your enemy.

Paul introduces him as "the devil." The truth is, the bible refers to him by several different names & each name gives us an insight into his "wiles" his methods & scheming strategies. (Believe me when I tell you that the devil isn't just out there doing things randomly. You have a highly organized enemy who has a detailed plan, or strategy, to defeat you & defeat me.) The word "Devil" means "accuser" or "slanderer", because he accuses God's people day & night before the throne of God (Rev 12:10).

The word "Satan" means "adversary". He's God's enemy (& because you've been created in the image of God, he hates you equally), he's your enemy. He's called the tempter, he's called a murderer, a liar, a thief. He's compared to lion, a serpent, a dragon & an angel of light (deceiver).

& He employs strategies w/in the context of all these things. He seeks to get you to question God's love, to question God's word, to think that he's the good guy & God's the One who holds you back & keeps you oppressed. In 1st Cor Paul writes about a situation where he exhorted them to remove a person from their church because of the nature of their rebellious, unrepentant sin (1 Cor 5). But in the 2nd letter you discover the person eventually did repent, but they weren't allowing him back. So Paul said, "Hey, forgive this guy & receive him back." He said, "...lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices."³ Or the way he thinks...

³ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [2 Co 2:11]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Evidently one of his “wiles” is to work us into bitterness & unforgiveness. As the accuser he wants to heap upon you condemnation, riddle you w/guilt so you won’t set your life to serve the Lord. How do you overcome that? Trust in the forgiveness of God through the blood of J.C. He bore your guilt, He suffered your shame, it’s yours (mine) to receive His forgiveness as we confess & repent of our sin... Now lead your life for the glory of God.

Put on the whole armor of God (He’s given us all we need). In the book of Colossians we learn that Jesus has already *disarmed* all principalities and powers, he has no effective armor against the fully armed believer. You’re not fighting *for* victory, you’re fighting *from* victory & that changes everything.

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able *to stand* against the wiles of the devil. In Christ you are to stand your ground. We’re never told to go on the attack or look for demonic entities, we’re told to hold the territory that Christ has conquered.

Vs 12

Here’s what Paul is saying. As Christians our problems may at times surface in the physical, but they’re rooted in the spiritual. Our fight (our wrestling) isn’t against flesh & blood. If you’re striving w/your boss, having trouble w/your employees, if the trouble is w/your parents or your teenagers, your focus is on the wrong thing.

In 1 Kings 22:31 you find the king of Syria giving great advice to his troops. He says, “Fight w/no one, small or great, but only w/the king...” “Don’t get sidetracked on the peripherals, stay focused on the primary target & we’ll win the war.” Great advice.

We get sidetracked by flesh & blood, but it’s spiritual entities that cause tension in your marriage, problems in the home, struggle w/parents or children. & I’m not saying that the world isn’t weighing in, that our flesh doesn’t desire its way. I’m saying that we’re not to be ignorant of the fact that the enemy is always at work.

Here Paul speaks of principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age & spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies. This is why there’s so much chaos, fear, danger, suffering & tragedy in this world.

& Paul doesn’t really discuss the enemies ranking system or structure in depth. Most believe what Paul lists here are various rankings of demonic entities. From those who harass & seeking enslave you personally to those who are over national territories. That may be, but it’s irrelevant to the big picture.

We don't care if we're up against a principality or ruler of darkness, the point here is that your enemy is incredibly intelligent, highly organized & has one primary objective, to destroy your life.

He attacks God's goodness, God's government, & God's goals. He wanted Adam & Eve to believe that God was w/holding something good from them by not allowing them to eat of the forbidden fruit. He told them they could live by their own rules, they wouldn't die like God said they would (they could govern themselves). He attacked God's goals for them by telling them they'd become as god themselves if they ate of the fruit. God was holding them back, they had greater potential than His goals allowed. & The deception led to disobedience & the disaster of sin.

Vs 13

Or another way to understand that, take advantage of every resource God has availed to you. "That you might be able to w/stand in the evil day, having done all, to stand." & Just so you know "the evil day" is every day until Jesus returns. As long as Satan is roaming this earth, it's an evil day.

Now here's the thing, we're not told (as noted earlier) to attack him, we're told to w/stand him. We don't need to be out looking for him, we're to be about our Father's business. But when he attacks *us*, we'll stand our ground *against* him. Peter gave much the same advice in 1 Pet 5 (You might look up James 4:7 as well).

I should also say this before we sign off here. We're never told to *fight* or *resist* temptation, we're told to *flee* temptation. Don't try to stand up against it, get as far away from it as you possibly can!

But as it pertains to the attacks & onslaught of the enemy, his desire to drag down both you, your friends & your family...no. We're to stand our ground, that's why God equips you, to enable you to fight effectively... I'm not saying it's easy.

I read a quote from the book, Fuzzy Memories, by Jack Handey. He said, "There used to be this bully who would demand my lunch money every day. Since I was smaller, I would give it to him. Then I decided to fight back. I started taking karate lessons, but the instructor wanted \$5 a lesson. It was cheaper to pay the bully, so I gave up karate."

It sounds funny but it's exactly the philosophy to too many Christians today. They believe it's easier to pay the bully than learn how to defeat him... We're not called to quit, or to lay down, give up or turn away. We're to w/stand him.

“What if I’ve fallen?” Get back up & get your armor put back in place. We’ll talk about the elements of armor next time. But for now, don’t sink down, silently turn & walk away, take up the whole armor of God, that you might stand against the scheming strategies, the cunning & clever attacks of the enemy. Submit to God, resist the devil, be strong in the Lord & in the power of His might...

Prayer Points:

Father, increase our strength. Teach us what it truly means to be strong in the Lord & in the power of His might. Teach us to lay hold of these truths by faith that we might lead lives of victory, not being enslaved to sin or some vice that manifests itself physically or emotionally but has roots spiritually. Help us that we not be distracted from the fight, but that we fight the good fight of faith to the glory of Your name.

You’ll never walk in true victory until your life belongs to J.C. personally. God has loved you w/an everlasting love, & Jesus fought for you & won the victory at the cross. Enter into that victory, repent of your sin & believe wholeheartedly upon Jesus & you will be saved. Don’t fight the wrong fight, don’t be found fighting against God, surrender your life to Him even now.