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Be Strong in the Lord

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to

stand.” Ephesians 6:10-13

There is an important connection between Ephesians 6:10-20 and the rest of the Book of Ephesians. Paul has spoken about the many spiritual blessings that we have in Christ Jesus. We have been chosen and adopted into the family of God. In Christ we have redemption through his blood. All of this has been accomplished when we heard the word of truth, the gospel of salvation. We were dead in trespasses and sins, but God made us alive in Christ. We are now God’s workmanship in Christ, and we are created for good works in which God has ordained that we should walk.

The Gentile world is no longer strangers or foreigners from the promises of God, but they are reconciled to God along with the Jewish believers and built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone. This was a great mystery before, but it has now been revealed by the Spirit through the holy apostles and prophets. The Gentiles, along with the Jews, are now fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of his promises in Christ through the gospel. The manifold wisdom of God is made known by the church to principalities and powers in the heavenly places. And thus, there should be glory to God in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever.

So, we are to walk worthy of this calling in Christ and should make it our aim to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. The apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers have been placed in the church to equip the church for the work it is to do. We are to put off the old man and to put on the new man. We are to be imitators of God as dear children and to walk in love. This will lead us to proper relationships in all areas of our lives. As we submit to God, we will learn to submit to one another in love and to have the proper love and concern for each other. Thus, we are led to be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.



The Power Is in the Blood of Christ

The power in spiritual warfare is in the cross of Jesus Christ and the blood that he shed. When we embrace the cross of Jesus, we learn how to be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

“In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with *Him* through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it” (Col. 2:11-15).

This passage in Colossians clearly connects the cross of Jesus, our obedience to the gospel in baptism, and our being made alive in Christ with the disarming of principalities and powers. Jesus triumphed over these powers by the cross, and our connection to the cross through the gospel enables us to put on the whole armor of God and to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Isaiah 59:11-17 speaks of what the Messiah, the Lord, has done: “We all growl like bears, and moan sadly like doves; we look for justice, but *there is* none; for salvation, *but* it is far from us. For our transgressions are multiplied before You, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions *are* with us, and *as for* our iniquities, we know them: In transgressing and lying against the Lord, and departing from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands afar off; for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.

So truth fails, and he *who* departs from evil makes himself a prey.

“Then the Lord saw *it*, and it displeased Him that *there was* no justice. He saw that *there was* no man, and wondered that *there was* no intercessor; therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him; and His own righteousness, it sustained Him. For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head; He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak.”

Verse 17 mentions the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation that the Lord put on. When we are in Christ, we are clad with the armor that he provides. He wears it himself, and in him we are equipped.

In Romans 13:11-14 we read: “And *do* this, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation *is* nearer than when we *first* believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to *fulfill its* lusts.”

In this passage to “put on the armor of light” means to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” and to live as he calls us to live. Notice that in 1 Thessalonians 5:8 two of the pieces of armor found in Ephesians 6 are analogous to different things: “But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and *as* a helmet the hope of salvation.” The importance of the armor of God is not so much in the analogy of the armor, but in what each part does. In other words, the main point is not that the breastplate is righteousness as in Ephesians or that it is faith and love as in 1 Thessalonians. The point is that righteousness is important as well as faith

and love.

While the NKJV uses “wiles”, the NIV reads “schemes”, the NLT uses “strategies”, and the Amplified says “schemes *and* the strategies *and* the deceits of the devil”.

The word translated here is Strong’s 3180 – *methodeia*, meaning “craft, deceit” In usage it means a way of searching after something, an inquiry, a method, scheming, craftiness, deceit. A word study of *methodeia* (the root of the English term, “method”) reveals that it means properly, a predictable (pre-set) *method* used in *organized evil-doing* (*well-crafted trickery*).

The point is that the Devil isn’t just floundering around and playing it by ear. He has a well-defined plan that he uses to undermine our faith. Therefore, we need to be fully equipped to meet him on the field of spiritual warfare.

What the Battlefield Looks Like

What kind of battle are we fighting? Is there an army in the field that we face? Will a sword and a shield be sufficient armor to wage war successfully? In some martial arts they use nunchuks, also called nunchaku. These weapons are two short sticks connected by a rope of chain. They are illegal in some states. Do you remember the scene when a man is being aggressive and swinging his nunchuks all around and making aggressive moves from a little distance away? The man he is confronting pulls out a gun and shoots him. The weapons being used by the opponents in that case were not on an equal par.

Paul affirms in this passage that the armor of the Christian is equal to the task. We must remember that the analogy is not so much about the actual armor but the power of Christ that it represents. Paul says that we do not wrestle against flesh and blood. This is a spiritual battle and the armor in this case represents spiritual power and strength.

This quote that my dad used is true and accurate for all of us and it describes the kind of battle we face: “The greatest battle that e’re was fought shall I tell you where and when? It was not fought on the battlefield; it is fought inside of men.” I found the complete poem by Joachin Miller from which this paraphrase came entitled *The Greatest Battle That Ever Was Fought*:

The greatest battle that ever was fought—
Shall I tell you where and when?
On the maps of the world you will find it not:
It was fought by the Mothers of Men.

Not with cannon or battle shot,
With sword or nobler pen;
Not with eloquent word or thought
From the wonderful minds of men;

But deep in a walled up woman's heart;
A woman that would not yield;
But bravely and patiently bore her part;
Lo! there is that battlefield.

No marshalling troops, no bivouac song,
No banner to gleam and wave;
But Oh these battles they last so long—
From babyhood to the grave!

But faithful still as a bridge of stars
She fights in her walled up town;
Fights on, and on, in the endless wars;
Then silent, unseen goes down!

Ho! ye with banners and battle shot,
With soldiers to shout and praise,
I tell you the kingliest victories fought
Are fought in these silent ways.

In these verses in Ephesians 6, Paul described the spiritual enemy. He had already mentioned the “devil”; but Satan has many allies, “the spiritual hosts of wickedness.” It is an unpardonable error to suppose that Paul here had any reference to the

mythological gods of the Greeks and Romans, or to any of the complicated theories of vain speculators regarding the unseen creation. Of them, Paul affirmed nothing. It is a fact beyond denial that the ancient pagan world was organized along patterns of evil, and the whole pagan complex of antiquity was fitted together, dovetailed and interwoven in such a manner as to forbid the notion that such a sprawling, powerful, effective and arrogant pagan society was merely accidental. Satan had organized it. Furthermore, evil is still organized; and organization presupposes an organizer. (Coffman)

This is equally true in our own day. The real power behind various movements and ideas is Satan and his cohorts. He is still lying like he has always done. It began long ago in the Garden of Eden: “Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’ And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said, “You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.”’ Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil”’ (Gen. 3:1-5). Satan has always been an expert at calling white, black and black, white.

What is the evil day Paul mentions here? Coffman states: “The notion that Paul here referred to ‘the time which the horoscope has designated as dangerous, when the unlucky star is in the ascendant’ is ludicrous. Nothing could have been any further from the mind of the apostle! What is meant, of course, is the day of crisis or decision; and, as Hendriksen pointed out: ‘In order to stand one's ground in the day of evil or crisis, let him stand his ground today!’ Over and beyond this, there also looms the certainty of the final judgment on the last day.”

Th is the day that Paul had in mind when he wrote in 2 Corinthians 6:1-2: “We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says: ‘In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you.’ Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

We often want to put off making a decision. We are often deceived into thinking that there is plenty of time and we will take care of that decision later. This is just another one of the spiritual battles that we face.

We do not oppose evil in our own strength but in the strength of the Lord. The power is in the cross of Jesus Christ and the blood that he shed. In Christ we will be able to equip ourselves for the battle that we face. The greatest battle that we fight is inside of us. The world tries to convince us that all this religious mumbo jumbo is nonsense. There is a clash of ideas and influences in the world, and we must decide which road to take. Jesus described these two ways in the Sermon on the Mount:

“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matt. 7:13-14).

My friend, which way will you choose?

L Scott Gage
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Sources: Burton Coffman Commentary /Thayer's Greek English Lexicon
<https://www.christianity.com/wiki/christian-terms/what-is-the-full-armor-of-god-how-can-i-put-on-the-whole-armor-of-god.html>
<https://pursuitbible.com/armor-of-god/>

Reflections from the Psalms: Psalm 6

Depression, loneliness, anguish - these are not very "positive" words, yet they describe conditions that all of us face at one time or another in our lives. When a person has to deal with something that causes such feelings, a common thought is, "I am all alone with this", or "No one has had to deal with what I am dealing with right now". Yes, at such times, feelings of isolation seem to swell up like a monster wave and make things even worse.

Although a person may "feel" isolated, the psalms clearly show that this is not correct. In fact, throughout the Bible, many of the great people of faith had to deal with serious problems that left them in turmoil, depression, and anguish. At one time, Paul was so discouraged and anxious that, when an opportunity to spread the Gospel opened up, he decided to seek Titus instead. After Peter denied the Lord three times, the cock crowed, and Jesus looked at him. Peter fled from the courtyard and wept bitterly.

The Lord instructed Samuel to tell King Saul that he was cut off from the Lord due to his disobedience. Samuel did what the Lord told him to do, but his grief for Saul was so deep, that the Lord told him to get up and go to Bethlehem. What about Abraham? What were his thoughts as he took Isaac up to sacrifice him to the Lord? No, the terrible emotions that accompany the trials of life, are not reserved simply for people today. Men and women throughout the centuries have had the same problems.

This is why the words of David in Psalm 6 are so relevant for us today. In this Psalm, we find David trying, unsuccessfully, to deal with a very heavy load. It may have been at night, we do not know, but his turmoil is very evident. Look at the words that describe his anguish "I am faint Oh Lord; heal me, for my bones are in agony. My soul is in an-

guish. How long O Lord, how long?" (vs. 2-3)

How often have we echoed such words? In verses 6 and 7, David continues, "I am worn out from groaning; all night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears. My eyes grow weak with sorrow; they fail because of all my foes." David's foes were certainly real enough; but during the night, they were -coming to him in his thoughts and dreams. Sometimes the worst foes we face are at night in our thoughts.

If Psalm 6 ended with verse 7, then the mood and message would be very bleak, and there would appear to be very little comfort for us as we face our trials and foes. But David continues in verses 8-10. As he considers the events in his life, he turns to the only source that can truly provide help and comfort - prayer to the Living God.

In this psalm - this prayer - we can actually see David beginning to put things back into perspective. Yes, he was facing severe problems. Yes, his foes seemed to be too numerous to count. Yes, he saw no immediate solution. But he **knew** that he was the Lord's Anointed King over Israel. He knew that the Lord was with him in spite of what his emotions were telling him, and he knew that the Lord would help him. As he prayed, the problems and foes began to recede into the background.

Notice that the Lord did not answer his prayer with an impressive miracle, or instant answers. In this Psalm, we see no evidence that the outward foes were gone. Instead, the Lord answered his prayer in his heart and soul. THAT was where true peace and healing would begin.

Today, many Christians repeat the words of David. "How long, O Lord, how long?" Our Father's answer may not be immediately apparent. When we wake up the next morning, the problems of life

will still be there. But our Father **will** respond immediately within our souls.

David's peace came from the fact that he was able to face what was ahead. As Children of God, as members of God's Household, how much more can we expect help when we pray for healing and release from our anguish?

Depression, loneliness, and anguish exist in life.

Christians are not guaranteed a trouble-free life in this world, but in Jesus Christ, we KNOW that the Lord will help us. We KNOW that today's problems will fade. We KNOW in Christ that we CAN overcome our foes. Faith, trust, prayer practiced everyday works! Psalm 6 - What a jewel!

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A Sense of Direction

As I stepped out of the house earlier this morning to begin the day's activities, I immediately knew the seasons were changing. The air was brisk to say the least, and then from the sky came further evidence in the familiar sound of flocks of geese flying south. Since my earliest years I have been amazed in watching the "V" shaped flocks as they change leaders and then press on to their winter habitat. Each time I witness this, my mind begins to think of the great instinct that God has placed within these birds. Although many of them have never made this journey, they are still drawn to the same areas by way of the flyways year-after-year.

While considering that great "sense of direction" within them, I think about man, and how he at times seems to not possess that sense at all. Our nation's prisons are full of individuals who have followed the course of their own choosing. Counselor's offices are full of couples who are tired of trying to find their own way, and so desperately want some normalcy in their marriage. Our world is literally dotted with re-hab facilities that await the next young or older person who has become dependent on drugs or alcohol. Why does it seem as though many are just blundering around in the darkness and stumble over every obstacle?

The answer is they are allowing the world to lead them! God's word tells us "*it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps*" (Jer. 10:23). You

see, it's not that God hasn't given man more than ample "direction"; there are simply those who think their way is better. "*There is a way that seems right to a man...*" (Prov. 14:12). Our way in life is not meant to be our own. We are created to belong to God! Man is expected to walk in the path which God has marked out for him in the word. It's when man fails to "*walk in the light*" that he finds himself in constant trouble.

We are in desperate need of God's divine guidance, and it is freely given to all who will accept it. When we live by God's word, it doesn't mean all the disappointments and sadness in life disappear, but it does mean there is one with you who understands. God challenges all who "*labor and are heavy laden*" to seek his guidance, and not to try it alone. "*But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot has held fast to his steps; I have kept his way and not turned aside*" (Job 23:10-11).

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Silent Prayer

A little boy went with his dad to run some errands. At lunchtime they went to a favorite restaurant, and when the food came, the father said, "Son, we'll just have a silent prayer for the food." Both bowed their heads.

The father finished his prayer and looked up, but the little boy was still praying. He waited and waited, and still the little fellow didn't look up. Finally the boy finished and his dad asked him, "What were you praying for that took so long?" The boy answered, "How do I know? It was a silent prayer."

Adam's Shorts

Six-year-old Ned's mother was looking through an old family Bible when an oak leaf fell out. Ned said, "I guess that must be Adam's shorts."

Budget Cuts

Due to the recession, to save on energy costs, the light at the end of the tunnel will be turned off.
Signed: God



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