

Be Strong in the Lord

Ephesians 6:10-13

Introduction

This morning, I want to consider three principles of spiritual warfare from Ephesians 6:10-13...

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¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

Exposition

I. Be Strengthened (Vss. 10-11a)

As we consider verses 10-11, we need to be aware of a little grammar that goes a long way. Our English translations often say something like, "Be strong," or "Be strengthened," which, if we are not careful, we can assume means that we have the ability to make ourselves strong. Yet, these verbs are actually in a passive voice, which means that the work of strengthening or making strong is actually a work that someone else does to us. In this case, it is the Lord, in the strength of His might, who makes us strong. We are to be equipped with the strength that God provides. Not our own strength.

Therefore, if we would obey this first command, we must begin by recognizing our own helplessness. We must see ourselves as those who are in need of strength. We must, like the apostle Paul in **2 Corinthians 12:9**, recognize that "God's grace is sufficient for us, for His power is made perfect in our weakness." This command does not mean that we must muster up our strength. Instead, it means that we must look to God for the strength that He alone can supply, which, according to verse 11a, is the very armor of God. And while we will look at the armor of God in more detail next week, for now, you need to see and realize that the strength that we need is the strength that only God can provide us.

T.S. – Now that we have seen the source of strength comes from God, we must take some time to consider our enemy...

II. Know Your Enemy (Vss. 11b-12)

The end of verse 11 tells us that our battle is against "schemes of the devil." Verse 12 goes on to make it even clearer: 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. In other words, despite what politicians and pundits would like us to believe, our battle is not against those who are created in God's image. Our battle is not against those who have differing opinions from us. Our battle is not against those who annoy us and bother us.

Our battle is not against those that we fear because they are different from us. **Our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the kingdom of darkness that is ruled by the devil himself.** And what of the greatest schemes that the devil has ever pulled off is to make us believe that he is not the real enemy, but rather that those who he has captured are our enemies.

Let me see if I can put this in the word of the modern hymn writers, Keith and Krysten Getty, in their song, "O' Church Arise." They write, "Our call to war, to love the captive soul, but to rage against the captor; And with the sword that makes the wounded whole, we will fight with faith and valor. When faced with trials on every side, we know the outcome is secure. And Christ will have the prize for which He died: an inheritance of nations."

Did you hear that? Our call to war, to love the captive soul, but to rage against the captor! I fear that for many in the professing church, we have chosen to hate the captive soul and ignore the captor, to ignore the enemy of all souls, the devil. We look at people who are either different from us or who are enslaved to addiction, enslaved to immorality, enslaved to the destructiveness of sin, and instead of weeping over their lost condition, instead of agonizing over their coming judgment, instead of loving them enough to share the good news of Jesus' grace with them, we demonize them. We disregard them. We say they are a lost cause. We make them out to be the enemy, all the while God's Word has told us, "Our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the one who is like a roaring lion, prowling around seek to destroy people who are made in the image of God."

We must come to know our enemy, and our enemy is not our neighbor; the enemy is not the person on the other side of the political line; the enemy is the devil himself. And if he can get you to forget him and focus your attention on others, on flesh-and-blood, then you will not fight the spiritual battle that you were called to fight as a follower of Christ. You will get preoccupied with civilian affairs in this life and in the world. You will allow lost friends, family members, and acquaintances to walk right into eternal judgment because you deemed them to be enemies who were objects of wrath rather than seeing them as objects of mercy whom Christ came to save from their sins.

T.S. - If you do not know your enemy, then you will fight the wrong battles in this life. But, if you rightly identify your enemy as the devil, then you will fight, and when you do, you must fight with endurance...

III. Stand Firm (Vs. 13)

Verse 13 brings us back to where we started in verse 10. Verse 13 reminds us again of our need to be strengthened with the provision of God in Christ and stand firm in the battle that belongs to Him. Ultimately, Christ will be victorious over our enemies. That is the promise that we read of in 1 Corinthians 15:20-29...

Currently, Jesus is reigning at the right hand of His Father in heaven until all of His enemies are made His footstool. And He is reigning on our behalf, strengthening us to fulfill the work that He has given us till He returns. That work is glorifying God by making disciples of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. In this, we must stand firm!

Conclusion – Be Strengthened in the Lord, Know the Real Enemy, and Stand Firm until the Day Christ Returns