

### **Eph 6:10-11 Be Strong in the Lord**

The Ephesians were well aware of the spiritual opposition we face. Acts 19:18–19 makes clear. **18 Also many of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices. 19 And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone; and they added up the prices of the books and found it to be fifty thousand pieces of silver.** To these people, already convinced of the reality of evil forces in the Spiritual world, and the power of Satan and his minions, Paul needed to show them that their new life in Christ has a defense against this onslaught. As Jesus said in John 10:10 **10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came so that they would have life, and have it abundantly.** To use Peter's language, Satan **"prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour"** (1 Pet. 5:8).

### **Finally, be strong in the Lord, and the power of His Might**

Paul says be strengthened in the Lord, that is, in the might of his strength. The verb here from dynamai to be enabled, to be capable, is a present imperative passive verb here, a command to "be strengthened, now" The power does not come from us, but from God. This usage is similar to that in Paul's prayer that the believers might be strengthened with power or might Eph 3:16 **that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner self, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love,** We are strengthened "in the might of his strength" from the inside out, by following Him closely. If you're expecting an attack, do you want to be close to your bodyguard, or far away? Well, if you're expecting a spiritual attack, it's much better to be close to the Lord, near to "the might of his power" (Eph 1:19) than far away. He is the source of the needed supernatural power, the "strength, might, dominion, mastery" that is needed in the battle.

The powerful combination of the world, the flesh, and the devil is inevitably overwhelming, left to ourselves. This is why Paul doesn't merely say that the armor of God is important, he emphasizes that we're operating in the strength of the Lord when we're fighting the battle His way. Our battles must be fought on our knees. In His power, Zech 4:6b... **'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the Lord of armies.** Being strong in the Lord is about preparing for the inevitable battle continually, keeping your sword of the Word sharp, by staying in it. Keeping your armor in good repair, with no holes, through discipline and devotion to God. Paul doesn't just say, "Bring the armor of God along with you on the off chance that you might need it." Rather, he says, "You will need it; so put it on." The enemy picks times to attack when we're hungry tired, and weak physically. That's what He tried to do to Jesus in the Temptation, and that's what he'll try on you. Matthew 4:1-4 **Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And after He had fasted for forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. 3 And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." 4 But He answered and said, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes out of the mouth of God.'"** Notice I said Jesus was physically weak. He couldn't depend on the strength of His own body to fight. But, he had just been practicing a spiritual discipline, fasting, for 40 days. Spiritually, He was strong, and was ready with just the Sword stroke of the Word that would defeat Satan's attack. It's through God's power, not ours that we will be victorious, and sometimes our weakness is just what we need to help us learn to continually rely on God. Paul makes this point in 2 Cor 12:9-10 **And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in distresses, in persecutions, in difficulties, in behalf of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.** Keep fighting the Good Fight. Keep fighting the Lord's Way, keep fighting the battle on your knees, even if it feels sometimes like you're losing. That's just your flesh dying, so that you can be strong in the Lord, and depend on Him. If we do what the Lord says, and follow Him, live like He lived, we will always be victorious. Matthew 16:24-26 **24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wants to**

**come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. 26 For what good will it do a person if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his soul?**

We're going to have good days and bad days in pursuit of our upward call of glory. Indeed, the Holy Spirit often turns us over to ourselves to show us just how weak we really are. (see King Hezekiah 2 Chronicles 32:21). He desires above all that we would grow in humility and dependence upon his grace. The confession accurately describes our experience. We learn the depravity of our own sinful nature, the vast superiority of Satan's skill, our constant need of Christ's perfect sacrifice, and the ongoing power of the Holy Spirit within us most often through our experience of our own sin and failure rather than during our moments of spiritual triumph. Nothing teaches us the power of Satan or our utter dependence upon God more than our spiritual failures. What shall we say except, **"Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"** (Rom. 7:24).

Life is a battle for Christians; Jesus told his disciples to take up their cross (Matt. 16:24), not to take up their armchair. We are engaged in conflict against an enemy whose strength and skill far outmatch our own. But it is a battle that we have been equipped to fight in the sure knowledge that we've been enlisted on the winning side. We take up our cross because our Savior first took up his. We wear God's armor because Jesus wore it first. In the final analysis, standing our ground simply means clinging desperately to Jesus Christ as our only hope of salvation. That attitude of dependent trust is true victory.

#### **11a Put on the full armor of God**

It's important to remember that God provides the armor. This is not a physical battle, but rather a spiritual one. Thus it requires supernaturally provided spiritual armor. We are called to stand in the armor. Armor is useless, if the soldier in the armor runs away. God hasn't left it up to us to decide whether that purpose will succeed! As long as we keep pressing into Him, relying on Him, following Jesus in His submission of His will to the Father, then His mighty power will be continually at work in our lives as believers to accomplish His ultimate purpose of presenting us to himself holy and blameless, to the praise of his glory. As Paul said in Philippians 2:13, **it is God who is at work in us, both to will and to work for his good purpose.** And, for those who have a bent toward being judgmental, remember Romans 14:4 **Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.**

The armor of God is God's armor. Our sanctification rests first and foremost on the finished work of Christ in our place. As we shall see, the armor of God is quite literally God's armor—armor designed for and worn by God first and foremost. The armor God gives us to defend and protect us against Satan's onslaught is the armor that he has already worn in the decisive battle on our behalf. We fight and stand firm against Satan only in the strength that comes from the victory that Christ has already won for us. That is why each of the various pieces of armor points us to Christ. The belt of truth is the belt that girds the messianic king in Isaiah 11:5. The breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation come from the divine warrior's arsenal in Isaiah 59:17. The feet shod with gospel readiness are the feet of those who proclaim the arrival of Messiah's kingdom in Isaiah 52:7. God himself is the shield of faith, as he describes himself in Genesis 15. The sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, is the weapon wielded by the promised servant of the Lord in Isaiah 49:2. What God clothes us with is nothing less than his own armor, the same armor that Christ has already worn on our behalf in his lifelong struggle with the mortal enemy of our souls, Satan himself. That doesn't mean that we'll never have to struggle with sin, of course. Quite the reverse: Paul clearly expects us to be engaged in a daily life-and-death struggle with Satan in all of his awesome power. The imagery of armor and battle shows us that the fight against sin must involve blood, sweat, and tears. Philippians 2:12–13 tells us **to work out our own salvation because God is at work in us.** But Christ's victory over sin at the cross means that your struggle against sin is never hopeless. God will ultimately sanctify you—he has promised to do so. On that last day, you will rise to new life in Christ and stand in God's presence, made perfect forever. Sin and Satan shall not

have ultimate dominion over you. Our part is to stand, in the armor that God has given us, and always be ready for attacks of the enemy which would seek to drive you away from God, and limit your usefulness for the Kingdom of God. 1 Cor 16:13 13-14 **Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. 14 All that you do must be done in love.**