



STAND

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15 May 2022

Introduction

Quote from John Newton: "Read the Scripture, not as an attorney may read a will, but as the heir reads it, as a description and proof of his interest."

Ephesians 6:10-13 ESV

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. ¹³ 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 firm.

1. Be strong

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

Finally – or from now on

Be strong

This is not an instruction to revive an old gym membership.

It is not the kind of strength that comes from your own actions – either your will power or moral power.

Be strong in the Lord

It is strength derived from another, by association with another – the Lord himself.

It is an imperative. An instruction or command to be something.

It is found throughout Scripture that God's people have been, and need to be, strengthened in the Lord. And the Lord God takes pleasure in strengthening his people.

You may feel inadequate and be inclined to shrink back from active life in this Kingdom Community, you may lack strength – but take heart, be encouraged by the men and woman in Scripture who have been made strong by and in the Lord:

For example:

- In the Psalms we are urged to find our strength in the Lord who is our refuge, a very present help in trouble. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Psalm 46.
- King David exhorts us to seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually! 1 Chronicles 16:11

- Asaph in Psalm 74 confesses “Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever... But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of your works.”
- The prophet Isaiah proclaimed, “Behold God is my salvation; I will trust and will not be afraid; for the Lord God is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation.” “The everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.... gives power to the faint and to him who has no might he increases strength... they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength. Isaiah 40
- When a word was revealed to Daniel in Daniel 10 he was standing on the bank of the Tigris river, he lifted up his eyes and saw a vision of the Lord... when he heard the sound of his words he fell on his face to the ground in deep sleep and the Lord touched him and when he was able to open his mouth he said “I retain no strength .. for now no strength remains in me, and no breath is left in me”. And the Lord having the appearance of a man touched him and strengthened him saying “O man greatly loved, fear not, peace be with you: be strong and of good courage.” And as he spoke to me I was strengthened and said, “let my Lord speak, for you have strengthened me.”
- “At my first defence no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth..... The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.” 2 Timothy 4

These examples of God strengthening his people (the Psalmist, David, Isaiah, Daniel and Paul) in Scripture are there for our encouragement. Even the weakest among us can be made strong in the Lord. God supplies strength. God will do that for you as you look to him. Jehoshaphat once said, “We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.” (2Chron 20:21) Receiving strength and growing strong in the Lord is not optional when you know what is coming in the following verses.

Be strong is the command – we may be tempted to individualize it and try and develop our own inner strength, self-discipline or will power.

STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN THE STRENGTH OF HIS MIGHT

We need to be strong with the strength God supplies.

Think back to chapter 1 – that we may know what is...

“the immeasurable greatness of his power towards us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places”

God’s **mighty** power has an effect on everything, everywhere, the whole course of history is **directed by God’s will and according to his purpose**. It is amazing that God has chosen to direct his power in on one specific spot.

- On a hot, sunny day the sun shines with power on everything beneath it but if you take a magnifying- glass you can focus the rays of the sun even more powerfully on a small area. So, to God is not only bringing all things together under the headship of Jesus but

his incomparable great power, the immeasurable greatness of his power, is for us who believe.

That's the specific focus of God's power. His power is available for us who believe. His power flows into the Church as God gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

"This is the secret of the Christian life and the secret of church-life. We learn to rely on this union with Christ. We believe that we can do all things because Christ empowers us moment by moment with his resurrection power" (Michael Eaton)

In the 2nd prayer for the Ephesians in Chapter 3 Paul prays for them:

"be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith..."

In chapter 4 Paul exhorts the Ephesian believers to mature and grow up in the Lord so that they may no longer be:

- children – childish emotions and thoughts
- Tossed to and fro by waves – without a secure anchor in life
- Carried about by every wind of doctrine – influenced by different versions and **people's opinions** of the truth
- By human cunning – gullible to human trickery
- By craftiness in deceitful schemes – susceptible to devilish lies

Do you identify with any of these descriptions? Are you strong in the Lord? How do you change from weakness to strength? How do you grow to be strong in the Lord?

The answer lies within the letter to the Ephesians:

1. You can pray for strength
2. Our union with Christ is the source of many blessings. The flow of strength from the lord to us is one of them. The same power that raised the Lord Jesus from the dead may work in us.
3. **God's love for us is a source of great strength** – to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of god.
4. You grow strong in the lord in the context of a local church - where we are equipped and learn from one another in love.

"BE STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN THE STRENGTH OF HIS MIGHT"

2. Stand

¹¹ *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.*

We need strength before we can put on the **Lord's armour**.

Verse 11 says: **'Put on'**

This is an action that we are commanded to take; an action that only we can do. We must follow the command to **stand against the devil's** schemes.

This is not something that God does for us – it is what we do for him and for ourselves. We must follow these instructions if we are to stand. We must do something. Sometimes we mix things up and get the order wrong! We pray about things God says we must do, we ask in prayer for God to do what we have already been commanded to do, such as – please put on my armour Lord, love for neighbour, etc.

STAND

We must put on the armour so that we can stand. **We mustn't underestimate this word STAND.**

Stand (3x, 1x to withstand): It means to hold your ground, and guard what you have received and believed, face the danger, be ready and prepared. This is not a passive stance, it is fighting talk. **Don't turn your back;** stand and face the enemy, brace for fight not flight.

Put on the armour and later take up the whole armour of God. Put on / take up.

This is something we must do. Without the armour there is no possibility of standing our ground against the spiritual forces of evil. They are powerful, not to be underestimated, they will overtake us without it! This is not an optional extra for super committed believers. It is for ordinary disciples; we all have a target on our back.

- **Note that it is God's armour** – it is not of our making/ designer armour for his people
- God provides the armour and we must put the whole armour on.
- Not just the part we prefer but the whole armour of God.

Putting on the armour enables us to STAND. It is a victory in life despite all that comes at you in the way of temptations, hardships, prosperity, doubt, fear. To be found standing at the end is to have gained a great victory. It is finishing the race, fighting the good fight of faith, it is preparing for the crown of life, the expectation of reward.

The opposite - To fall or fail in our faith. To lose our witness, to be stripped of the promises that are ours, to fall to temptation and to compromise our faith and lose our holiness, our zeal and our first love for the Lord and our inheritance.

Keep these things from previous chapters in Ephesians in mind:

1. We are no longer sons of disobedience, following the prince of the power of the air and living in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind. We have been made alive in Christ and we have been saved by grace. **And it is God's desire** (in my own words) to show off the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness to us in Christ Jesus. We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for **good works...**
2. There is a lot at stake. There is a lot to live for, to have faith for. Therefore we must give no opportunity to the devil, to take no part any longer in the unfruitful works of darkness. There is a lot to stand for!

*Stand up, stand up for Jesus
Stand in his strength alone;
The arm of the flesh will fail you,
You dare not trust your own.
Put on the gospel armour,
Each piece put on with prayer;
where duty calls or danger,
Be never wanting there.*

3. Fight

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. ¹³ 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 firm.

Now we send up a drone with an infra-red camera to spy on the enemy. To find out who the enemy is and what the enemy is doing:

Who is the enemy?

- The enemy are unseen, powerful spirits in heavenly places - **You can't fight this enemy** relying on your own strength, morality, or intellect – pea shooter /a tank
- The enemy is evil - conflict resolution **won't work**
- The enemy is against God and his people – they want to see you fail

Our enemy, the devil is a personal being who hates God's word, God's Son and God's people. The devil has power over nature, animals and has access to our hearts. The devil can blind the mind and trap us emotionally for mentally. The devil attacks with evil thoughts, depression, discouragement, jealousy and pride. He can conduct special attacks described as fiery darts in Ephesians 6.

Just as we thought we could lead happy, heavenly, peaceful lives we are introduced to the enemy of our souls. Yes, we are chosen and have a new privileged position in Christ which we must live out in relationships in the church, home and at work. **It sounds easy enough... but** there is a spanner in the works, a complication – we have gained a new enemy – the devil who makes things difficult, hinders progress and trips us up. The enemy does not want us to succeed, the enemy wants us to sin.

Wrestle

Our wrestle, our **fight... is not against humans. This fight is much** more difficult than fighting against men. Then we would use weapon against weapon, we would square up and fight with our own strategies and strength.

But the verse says **"we do not wrestle against flesh and blood"** to show that we cannot stand against this enemy with human power alone. It is a spiritual battle against a powerful, organized, invisible and evil enemy.

The fight plays out (not on the great battle fields like Normandy, Isandlwane, and Mariupol) in the ordinary relationships, roles and routines of life.

Paul has just addressed families, parents and children, servants and masters, marriage husband and wife. It is here that Satan trips and traps us and conducts his 'special operations' to destroy our faith and spoil our relationships.

We must realise we are not dealing with flesh and blood but with a malevolent and wicked enemy looking for weak spots in our character to exploit. We neglect this enemy at our peril: **"When the enemy is neglected, he does his utmost to oppress us with sloth (laziness), and afterwards disarms us by terror; so that, ere (before) the engagement has commenced, we are vanquished (thoroughly defeated)" John Calvin**

I will now show some of the devil's characteristics and tactics taken from Ephesians along with references from a few other Scriptures. (It is not a complete teaching on evil)

Reading through Ephesians you will find that there are references to the devil or his agents in every chapter ending with the verses we are focussing on in Chapter 6.

In Chapter 1 and 3

Rule, authority, power and dominion in the heavenly places gives us an idea of the extent of the devil's power.

In Chapter 2

The devil is referred to as the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.

In Chapter 4

Give no opportunity to the devil and don't be carried by the craftiness in deceitful schemes

In Chapter 5

The days are evil and take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness.

In Chapter 6

The verses we have read in this section

And extinguish the flaming darts of the evil one

It is easy to overlook these references as you are reading through the letter. Note that although the enemy is powerful and dangerous the focus is on the unsearchable riches of Christ and God's great plan and purposes. **I have known people who are so interested in the devils' schemes that they end up preoccupied with the devil. But the truth is:** God is in control; the devil is a created being and is very small in comparison to God, who is eternal and immortal. The devil exists as a created being only with God's permission although his end is near.

KNOW YOUR ENEMY

- The devil rules

The Lord Jesus referred to the devil as the "ruler of this world" (John 14:30)

And Ephesians 2:2 also describes the devil as the prince of the power of the air, he rules in heavenly places...

There are two Greek words for ruler – "archon" and "archegos"

Archon (G758) – is one who temporarily acts as a leader – Satan is called this but never an archegos.

Archegos (G747) – has an inherent right to be a leader/ author or source

The Lord Jesus is not One who assumed leadership but is the author of all things.

- The Lord Jesus is Leader and Saviour (Acts 5:31)
- The Lord Jesus is the Author of life (Act 3:15)
- The Lord Jesus is the founder and perfecter of our faith (Heb 12:2)
- The Lord Jesus is the founder of their salvation (Heb 2:10)

- The devils' schemes, craftiness and deceitfulness

¹¹ *"put on the armour of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil"*

Greek methodeia – to work by method, strategies, lie in wait, ambush, craftiness

Thomas Brooks wrote that Satan has "several devices to deceive, entangle and undo the souls of men"

"Satan does more hurt in a sheep's skin than he does roaring like a lion"

"The devil will tell us 100 truths only to deceive us with the 101st thing as a lie to trap and deceive." (William Bridge)

Satan lays snares in the path of life to trap us.

In 2 Timothy 2:26 Paul writes that opponents of the gospel have been snares by the devil and captured to do his will.

"Satan hath snares for the wise and snares for the simple; snares for hypocrites, and snares for the upright; snares for generous souls, and snares for timorous souls; snares for the rich, and snares for the poor; snares for the aged, and snares for youth, &c. Happy are those souls that are not taken and held in the snares that he hath laid." (Thomas Brooks)

- Examples from Thomas Brooks (**Special Remedies Against Satan's Devices**) on the **devils' traps**. He gives 29 devices and many remedies to prevent the devil's schemes. Here is one of them:

The devil's first device to draw the soul to sin is – "to present the bait and hide the hook, to present the golden cup and hide the poison, to present to the soul the profit that may flow by yielding to sin while hiding the wrath and misery that will result by committing sin." So, the devil cheated Adam and Eve - he gave them an apple in exchange for paradise.

Sin gives Satan a power over us, and an advantage to accuse us and to lay claim to us, it bewitches the soul and when it is on the throne the soul cannot easily leave it. It makes the soul call evil good, and good evil, light darkness and darkness light... forever take heed (be careful) **not to play or take the devil's golden baits."**

The schemes of the devil are many and varied with devices to distract, divide, discourage and destroy people. Do not be ignorant of the schemes of the devil.

In John 10:10 the Lord Jesus said, *"the thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."*

Some possible indications that you have been caught in the snare are when you lose joy in serving, when you keep dark secrets, when you habitually lie, when you make vows to yourself that are not godly, when the abundant life the Lord promised is not evident in your life.

Have you fallen prey to the snare of the devil, have you taken the bait?

- The devil is strategically organized.

There are:

- Rulers
- Authorities
- cosmic powers over this present darkness
- spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places

All of these exist in the heavenly realm and desire to see the downfall of humans. The opposition is not one supernatural being but a whole range of spiritual forces of different rank, authority, and capabilities. The spiritual forces of evil are well organized and have declared believers target number one!

- The devil wrestles **against God's people**

Wrestle – close combat, hand to hand encounter, intense and personal struggle
This struggle is not against humans but against spiritual forces of evil

Against – used 6x. They are not for us but against us, we wrestle against them.

An example from Scripture of a struggle with the devil:

Satan tempted the Lord Jesus in the wilderness recorded in Luke 4. The devil tempted him for 40 days. When Jesus was physically at his weakest point Satan tempts him another 3x. After defeating the devil the Lord returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. The devil departs from Jesus for a season, until a good opportunity should return, which time came when:

- the Lord said to Peter get behind me Satan (Mark 8:33)
- the Pharisees wanted to kill him (John 8:40)
- at the garden of Gethsemane (Mat 26:36fw) – trying to make Jesus draw back and distract him from the reason he came into the world – the cross.

When the Lord Jesus was arrested on the night of his betrayal... **“The Lord said “this is your hour, and the power of darkness.”**

The devil had his day, his hour, when the power of darkness and the ancient serpent bruised the heel of the Lord on the cross.

The triumph of the devil was short-lived, just 3 days, and the Son of God crushed the head of the ancient serpent and set us free from the dominion of the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.

There is such a time as the evil day where evil men and devils work together to crucify the Lord, to destroy the testimony of believers and hinder the progress of the gospel.

We are warned earlier in Ephesians 5 to look carefully how we walk, to be wise, making the best use of time because the days are evil.

The evil day is when temptation, desire and opportunity to sin coincide. (Sinclair Ferguson)

We must stand in the evil day!

The evil day came for David (2 Samuel 11: 2) late one afternoon, when he arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful. There was a hole in his armour!

The evil day came for Ananias and Sapphira when they kept back for themselves some of the proceeds of the sale of a property and laid only a part of the proceeds at the apostles' feet. "But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land?... Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God." Acts 5

The evil day came for Peter when he was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came up to him and said, "You also were with Jesus the Galilean" but he denied it before them all, saying, "I do not know what you mean." ... and then again he denied knowing Jesus with an oath: "I do not know the man." ... and then again they said... your accent betrays you... he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know the man" (Matthew 26)

The evil day comes for all of us; there is a target on your back. The timing is orchestrated by our enemy to trip us up and snare us and render us useless as a witness for the Lord Jesus. But we wrestle, and put on, and take up the armour of God

And having done all, to stand firm.

Conclusion

1. Ultimate spiritual warfare is taking the gospel to the world - With spiritual armour on Paul set out from Antioch missionary journey to proclaim the mystery of the Gospel
2. We are going to win the battle
We can draw much hope and courage from the fact that if we do what we are told in these four verses of Ephesians 6 we will be on the winning side.

We can be confident that the risen Lord is with us, and one day all his enemies will be made his footstool. Right now, the Lord Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father and he is interceding for us. The Lord wants us to succeed – to remain faithful and to stand against all the opposition of the devil.

Have confidence child of God...

"The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life." Psalm 121

Yes, the Lord God will finish the work he has started in us. Have boldness in the Lord Jesus who is for us and not against us. We have access to him and the Father through our faith in him.

The devil, the angels, the forces of evil at work in the world are no match for him for God the Father has put all things under his feet and the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to his eternal purpose that he realized in Christ Jesus our Lord in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

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 5. M. Eaton - **Ephesians**
 6. W. Hendriksen – **New Testament Commentary – Ephesians**
 7. John Calvin – **Commentary on Ephesians**
 8. **The message of evil and suffering – Peter Hicks (BST series)**
 9. Thomas Brooks – **Precious Remedies Against Satan's devices**
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Discussion questions:

1. "The fight plays out in the ordinary relationships, roles and routines of life?" Consider where the fight is playing out in your life currently.
2. Have you fallen into any of the snares of the enemy (evidenced by losing your joy in serving, keeping dark secrets, etc.)?
3. How can you grow to be strong in the Lord? (see page 3 of notes)