

Be Strong in the Lord

Having studied Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, with all of its grandeur and beauty, one might wonder how he will conclude this great letter of "infinities and immensities."

He concludes this letter in a classic style, with an epilogue that satisfies the demands of any literary piece in his own day, but with a particular militaristic twist. Let's read the text together:

Ephesians 6:10-20

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. **14** Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, **15** and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. **16** In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; **17** and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, **18** praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, **19** and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, **20** for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

I. Be strong (vs. 10a).

In the Scriptures it is quite common for God's people to be told to "be strong" (Joshua 1:6, 7,9; 1 Corinthians 28:10; 2 Chronicles 32:7). It is our solemn obligation to be strong. There are many reasons why we would try to excuse ourselves from this commandment, but Paul grants no exceptions in his instructions. We are all to seek to be strong in our faith.

II. Be strong in the Lord.

It doesn't take long for us to realize that our strength will not be adequate for the military engagement with the devil. The presuppositions behind verse 10 are: 1) The devil is very powerful, very wicked, and extremely subtle and clever; 2) We are too weak to confront the devil, for he is much greater than we; and 3) God is infinitely stronger than the devil and, therefore, we must trust in Him. With Moses in Exodus 13 and David in 1 Samuel 30:6 we see examples of men who cannot face the battle in their own strength and must rely completely on the Lord.

One might ask, "How does one do this?" The answer is, "Simply by faith in Jesus Christ." The moment that we put our trust in Christ, He makes His power and might available to us for our engagement with the evil one.

III. Be strong in the strength of His might.

What the apostle is saying here is that *our* strength will come from *the Lord's* might. Who is the Lord? Paul is referring to the Lord Jesus Himself. We remember that Jesus confronted the evil face-to-face in the wilderness for 40 days and defeated him and then cast out demons throughout His ministry and healed the sick; and, ultimately, Jesus defeated the powers and authorities by His death on Calvary's cross and His resurrection from the empty tomb. It is *this* power that is available now to us. Paul says in Ephesians 1:19 that he prays that we might know "the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might (literally, "according to the working of the strength of his might") that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places..." In other words, Paul is

saying that the same power that raised the Lord from the dead is the same power that is available to us to confront the evil one.

Lest we think that we cannot accomplish this because of our particular circumstances, let us just remember who is writing this letter: the Apostle Paul. Where is the apostle when writing this letter? In prison in Rome, chained, on four-hour shifts, to Roman guards. One can see in Philippians 1: 18-20, how Paul triumphs in his circumstances: “Yes, and I will rejoice, or I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death” (vv. 19-20).

We are *all* to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.

Discussion Questions

1. Why does Paul use military language to describe the Christian life in Ephesians 6:10-20?
2. What does it mean for Joshua (Joshua 1: 6,7,9) and Solomon (1 Chronicles 28:10) and the Israelites (2 Chronicles 32:7) to be told “to be strong?” What does it mean for us to “be strong?”
3. How do Christians sometimes try to excuse ourselves from the command “to be strong?”
4. Describe the might of the Lord’s strength.
5. How do we access His strength in our daily lives?

Going Deeper

1. In what circumstances are you most sorely tempted to avoid the Christian fight? In what circumstances are you most tempted to fight with your own human strength?
2. What steps can you take to engage the Christian battle and to do so with the Lord’s strength?