

## How to be Strong in The Lord

01/12/25

A few weeks ago, we watched on the news the horrible tragedy in New Orleans. At the same time, there was an incident in Las Vegas where a vehicle exploded by a building. Some people were injured, but thankfully only the driver was killed. He had set up items in the back of the truck he rented to explode. The problem and it was a good problem, he used the wrong truck. He rented a Tesla Cybertruck. In my opinion, they are the ugliest truck on the road. However, they are known to be well built. In fact, the truck bed held the explosion in so most of the explosion went up. In a regular truck, the sides may have been blown out and people could have been killed. You see, the Cybertruck is made of special aluminum and stainless-steel material so the exterior body is very strong. It is said the material is in the same design as is used for the Starship Spacecraft that SpaceX makes. They say its bullet proof. Don't know if it is, but what we do know is that the Cybertruck has a very strong body or as I heard one news agency say, "it has strong armor". The armor is supposed to withstand dents, rust, and other issues. In other words, it has tough armor. The Bible talks about armor, but a different kind of armor.

Apostle Paul goes into some detail on how we are to be strong in the Lord and in God's mighty power and this requires us to put on the full armor of God. We have talked about how we are to pray for inner strength for each other. Today, we will look more into this armor and strength and why we should pray for inner strength. Let's turn to Ephesians 6: 10 – 20 where we read this, "<sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. <sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, <sup>15</sup> and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; <sup>17</sup> and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, <sup>18</sup> 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, <sup>19</sup> and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak. (ESV – Biblegateway.com)

Paul already gave us the example of prayer in chapter 3. Paul wanted the Church to pray for each other so that they could come to unity through Jesus by the working of the Holy Spirit. We pray for inner strength, stronger faith, filled with His Spirit, and filled with His love for each other. We need this to continue the work we all have been called to do. So, now we come to chapter 6 where Paul revisits inner strength. Paul states in verse 10, “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His Might”. We may say a quick prayer for each other, but we usually don’t pray for inner strength for each other. To Paul, this was an important element in his prayer for the Church. We should be concerned for each other’s spiritual well-being. Why? I’m glad you asked.

Paul gives us the answer in verses 11 and 12 where he states, “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 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.” The Church in America has weakened it’s view on the devil. It’s almost like we have taken the devil and made him into a fictitious character. People just want to hear the nice and fluffy stuff of the Bible. However, Paul was really concerned about the Church not taking the devil seriously. I don’t think the American Church of today takes the devil seriously. Now, we have to be careful here. C.S. Lewis once said we can make “two equal and opposite errors” regarding the devil. In other words, we are to take the devil seriously because of his great power, but at the same time we can’t take him too seriously because he is a defeated foe because of what Jesus did at the cross and grave. We have to know our enemy. Peter tells us this in 1 Peter 5: 8, “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world (ESV). The Greek term Peter uses for “adversary” means enemy, opponent in battle or in court (Strong’s Concordance). We have to understand something, the devil wants to beat us down in battle, but he also wants us to be defeated in court on Judgment Day. The devil wants you to

die spiritually. The Lord tells us this in Revelation 12:12, "Therefore, rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short! (ESV)." The devil's pride has been hurt, and he knows he can't defeat Jesus. He has already tried and failed, but who can he attack that is weaker than he? He is going after the human race, God's creation. Plus, he hates Christians most of all because we are on God's side. So, he will attack us like a roaring lion. We have to understand we can't fight this fight alone. We can't try to fight the devil on our own because we will fail every time. This is why Paul tells us in verse 11 of Ephesians that we must put on the "full" armor of God so the we can make a stand against the devil. The devil is stronger than you and he knows all your weaknesses. When the FBI first started, agents were limited in what they could carry for protection. On June 17, 1933, four officers were killed as Pretty Boy Floyd and his gang as they tried to free a friend that was in FBI's custody. The agents were outgunned. They were not allowed to carry machine guns. The gangs had better equipment than the agents for the FBI. After the Kansas City Massacre, the FBI made major changes and that included bigger guns so agents could fight against gangs and the mobs. For us to have any chance against the schemes of the devil to destroy us, we need the armor of God which is designed to handle what ever the devil throws at us. Paul tells us in verse 13, "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 (NIV)" Without God's armor, we can't stand against the devil. The problem is, a lot of this is in the spiritual realm that we can't see. We are at almost a complete disadvantage. York Water Company redid Lake Williams Dam and they closed off a road to the dam to vehicles, but you can walk down to it. It looks like a perfect party place and we know we are at a disadvantage. They'll see us before we see them because we can open the gate and drive down. They'll know it's us since no one else can drive down and they'll see our headlights. We are at a disadvantage. The devil is greater than we are and we are so limited.

So, Paul goes into some detail about this armor we need for battle, because the battle will come and keep coming. First off, we need the "full" armor, not just part of it. I had some Hazmat training 20 years ago and I had to put on a Hazmat suit with air tanks. You had to put the whole suit on for it to function properly. So,

Paul starts by saying we need the belt of truth fastened on. We get that truth from the Word of God, but also from the wisdom of God through His Spirit. I took a class online this week from the Lutheran Seminary and as the instructor, who was a Baptist, was teaching, I felt something was not right as she was teaching. I looked on my phone at where she was teaching at currently and found her bio. I found she was a gay pastor and that changed my whole outlook on what she was teaching on. She was teaching on Dementia and she did good on that. However, I was on my guard if she taught anything that went against God's Word. It was God's wisdom that first gave me warning to who was teaching the class. A lot of students today are falling into the trap of false teaching and the devil is good at using teachers to teach false theology.

Then, we are to put on the breastplate of righteousness. The Greek term used here for righteousness can mean moral purity and justice. This is God's righteousness that flows through us by the working of His Spirit. We know right from wrong according to God's standards, not human standards. When the devil whispers in our ear to do something we shouldn't, God's righteousness will remind us what is right. Plus, it reminds us that we do serve a just God who hates sin. God is righteous and does not tolerate sin in any form. The devil likes to tell us it's ok to do little sin since our culture does it. God does not change – He is always righteous and He wants us to allow Him to make us righteous as well.

Then, we are to put on the shoes of God's peace. We stand on His peace during battle and boy do we need that peace. His peace helps us to carry on during difficult situations like doing battle with the devil. Also, Paul had already talked about God's peace in chapter 2: 17, "And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. (ESV)" God's peace reminds us that our past sins have been forgiven no matter what the devil may put into our thoughts. No matter how bad you were, if you ask forgiveness from Jesus and believe in Him, Jesus will forgive all past sin. You are made clean through the blood of Jesus. You have become a new person through Christ and we need reminded of that during the battles with the devil. He likes to tell us we are too bad to be forgiven and we are not good enough to be a follower of Jesus. When we are under great pressure during a storm, these thoughts can become strong and they can shake our faith. This is what the devil wants. The peace of

God calms us during the battle by helping us to remember who we are and what victory we have through Jesus.

Next, Paul talks about taking up the shield of faith which can extinguish the flaming arrows of satan. The people during Paul's day would have understood this better. If the Roman army during Paul's day knew their enemies were going to shoot flaming arrows at them, the Roman soldiers would put wet leather over their shields to help put out the flames. Paul is not talking about saving faith here, but living faith. Faith is the trust we have in God and the love we have for Him. During our battles, we need to trust our Commander and keep our love for Him real and strong. When we do this, each battle will only strengthen our faith. This is what makes a positive out of the negative battles we have with the devil. Our faith becomes stronger and stronger as each flaming arrow is extinguished.

We then put on the helmet of salvation. This helmet reminds us which side we are on – the winning side. This helmet reminds us, as King David would say in many of his Psalms, God is my salvation. There are times during battle when we can become discouraged and defeated in this life. The helmet of salvation shapes our thinking to the point we are constantly being reminded of the cost of the cross and how we can't cheapen the grace that was shown there by giving up on the battle field. The salvation we received through Jesus reminds us who we really are during the battle and helps us to remain loyal to Him.

Next, we fight the devil with the best weapon we can use – the Word of God (sword). The Church in America has done great harm with this weapon. Many have dulled it on purpose to fit their selfish ambitions. When one dulls the sword by saying the Bible is no longer the absolute truth or we say there is errors and there is fictious stories in the Bible, we have dulled the sword and we have weakened our weapon. This causes us much more difficulty in battle. When the Ranger Division goes to the shooting range every year to qualify for the state, we make sure our guns are spotless so our guns don't jam up because of allowing our guns to remain dirty. We want to pass, so we always make sure our guns are clean and ready. We must trust God's Word and believe it or we will allow the devil a foot into the doorway and we give the devil's false teaching room to grow.

Finally, Paul finishes with the need for prayer. Since Paul goes back to prayer again, we must understand that praying for each other is extremely important.

Paul finishes with this in verse 18, "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel (NIV)". Inner strength and prayer go hand in hand. Paul even goes so far as to tell the Church to pray for him so he will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel. We pray at all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. In other words, we are to pray a lot during the day. Plus, you are to pray for me so that I will not waver under all the false teaching that is going on within the churches. We have a real battle going on with the devil, let's not give him an inch. God is on our side and the war is already won. We just need to be always ready for battles that will continue till Jesus comes back. To make sure we always have the full armor on and our sword is always sharp, we must continually pray for each other – for our faith to grow, for growing love, power and fullness through His Spirit, and for inner strength to do battle against the devil. Jesus is on our side.

*NIV Holy Bible. Crossway: Wheaton, 2001*

*The Strongest Strong's Concordance. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2001*