**Brought to Life; Brought Together**

**Spiritual Warfare: Stand Strong**

**Ephesians 6:10-13**

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 We are continuing our series in Ephesians, Brought to Life; Brought Together, looking at the spiritual battle we face in 6:10-20. We are still looking at 6:10-13, todays message is Stand Strong. The passage is simple. First, Paul instructs us to be spiritually strong by putting on the armor of God (10-11). Then Paul explains why we need to be spiritually strong, because the battle we fight is spiritual in nature (11-12). Finally, Paul ends with a call to take up the armor of God to stand strong because you are in a spiritual fight (13).

 Big Idea: We need supernatural strength to fight the devil’s schemes

**We Need Supernatural Strength (10-11)**

 First, Paul tells us to seek Christ’s power. We see this in verse ten, finally be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. We are strengthened in the Lord by putting on the whole armor of God. We are looking at the armor of God next week, but let me give you a quick explanation. The armor of God is a metaphor describing what being strong in the Lord looks like. Be strong by putting on the whole armor of God, for example, trusting God’s truth, trusting in Christ’s righteousness, and trusting God and his promises. We need supernatural strength to fight a supernatural enemy.

**We Battle a Supernatural Enemy (11-12)**

 Then Paul gives us the reason we need supernatural strength, because we face a supernatural enemy. Paul describes this supernatural enemy two ways. First, we need supernatural strength because our enemy is the devil (11). Human strength is no match for the devil; self-reliance is spiritual suicide. You are up against an enemy you cannot avoid nor stand against in your own strength (Acts 19:13, 15-16). You cannot stand against the devil in your own strength.

 To stand, withstand or stand firm (13) against the schemes of the devil means to not give in. For every weakness you have, the devil has endless ways to exploit you. I think the devil’s schemes have one central purpose, to lead you away from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ (2 Cor 11:3). The devil whittles away at your desire for Christ, your commitment to Christ, and your faith in Christ until you see sin as better and more pleasing than him. The devil uses false teaching, deception, distraction, sickness and suffering, disappointment, division in the church and numerous other ways to try to lead you away from your devotion to Christ. You need spiritual strength to stand against your enemy, the devil.

 Secondly, we need supernatural strength because we are in a spiritual battle. Look at how Paul emphasizes the battle as spiritual. First, he states his case negatively, for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, then positively, 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 (12). In other words, our fight is spiritual in nature against the devils well organized army. We wrestle against evil spiritual beings who are intelligent and powerful, who are organized and unified under the devil. Paul describes three types of fallen angels then summarizes them as evil spiritual forces. The first he describes as rulers, those who rule over others. Next, authorities have authority over others. The third is cosmic powers over this present darkness. This third category describes spiritual world powers or world rulers and probably refers to high ranking fallen angels (Dan 10:12-13). The phrase, over this present darkness describes their domain. The present darkness refers to this present evil age (Gal 1:4). This is why humanity is described as dwelling in darkness (Mk 4:16) and as darkness (Eph 5:8), blinded to the truth and beauty of Jesus (2 Cor 4:4), and under the sway of Satan’s power (Eph 2:2). Paul’s preaching of the gospel is described as God shedding spiritual light so we see, our eyes being opened so we turn from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to the power of God (2 Cor 4:6; Act 26:18). Then he sums up these three, rulers and authorities and cosmic powers, as spiritual forces of evil located in heavenly places, the unseen spiritual world. So, these fallen angels/demons describe part of an organized military hierarchy who we fight.

 The reason we can stand against them with Christ’s strength is because Christ has defeated them (1:19-22; 3:8-10; 4:8-10) and disarmed them in the cross (Col 2:15). So they acquiesce to him because they are powerless against him. Christ has defeated them and now rules over them in the heavenly places and will eventually finish this victory in the material world (1 Cor 15:24-25). What has happened in that realm has a connection in this realm. This spiritual victory is being played out in both places, in the heavenlies and in this world. So, for instance, we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (Eph 1:3) and have been seated with him in heavenly places (Eph 2:5-6). Being seated with him in the heavenly places means we share in Christ’s victory. So we are to cast off the works of darkness because we are no longer darkness but are light in the Lord and are called to walk as children of light (5:8-9). So, positionally, we are seated with Christ, reigning victoriously with him and at the same time practically, we are here, called to be strong in the Lord, standing victoriously against the schemes of the Devil. So again, on one hand we are seated securely and victoriously with Christ in the heavenly places and we are called to live out that victory in this life by standing against the schemes of the devil, remaining faithful to Christ.

**We Need God’s Armor to Stand Strong (13)**

 Paul concludes this with a call to action. 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 (13).  That is, seek to be spiritually strengthened for this spiritual battle because you cannot fight this in your own strength. So take up the whole armor of God so that you may be able: negatively, withstand the devil’s evil schemes to lead you astray from Christ and positively, you will be able to stand firm, faithful to Christ. Be strong in the Lord because self-reliance is spiritual suicide.

**Response:**

* How is God speaking to you?
* Do you recognize your need for supernatural strength?
* Do you fight spiritually as though your life depending upon it?

**Life Group Questions:**

1. How do you be strong in the Lord?
2. How strong is Christ in relationship to Satan (see Eph 1:19-22; 3:6-8; 4:8-10)
3. What does the armor of God describe?
4. What does Paul mean by stand (11), withstand and stand firm (13) against the devil?
5. Is standing offensive and defensive? Why? What is the significance of this?
6. What is the primary purpose of the devils schemes?
7. How is God speaking to you in this message?
8. How does this passage relate to you own discipleship?
9. How does this message help you in making disciples?