

Eph 6:10–13 (ESV) 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. Review

- A. Been looking at standing strong in the Lord – He is involved in the fight – we depend upon him
 - 1). We’re talking about the fight against the devil’s schemes
 - Temptations – doubt – discouragement – wanting to give up etc.
- B. We’ve also seen that doesn’t mean we’re passive – just watching – the Battle is the Lord’s
 - 1). We’re actively engaged – choosing to resist the world and the devil and go God’s way
 - 2). We’re also responsible to do those things God has given us that bring his strength into our life
 - a). Bible, prayer, church fellowship

2. Today we are going to see encouragement and balance

- A. I want to encourage you that God’s strength is enough for the “Evil day”

Eph 6:13 (ESV) 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). This is that day where trials, temptations, suffering are so elevated
 - It takes extraordinary strength to stand
 - a). We need God’s strength every day – on this day we need more
- B. The thought of such a day can frighten believers – we imagine scenarios – what if’s
 - 1). What if this or that happens – will I be strong enough to stand or will I deny my Lord?
 - a). What if it meant suffering physically? Jail? Losing a job? Friends?
 - 1a). Would I choose comfort over Christ? Choose the easier path?
 - 2). We need to know what the Word says to find comfort
- C. But we must also respond correctly to what the Word tells us do to – to be strong
 - 1). The balance is always God’s part and our part
 - a). To be able to put on the armor we must see this – God’s activity and ours

Transition: As we move through this I am going to try and blend these two together

 - A. Again this is the foundation we must understand to be strong in the Lord and put on the armor
 - B. Let’s start by seeing how God responds on those evil days – what he does

I. GOD’S STRENGTH ON THE EVIL DAYS

Listen to this incredible promise: Dt 33:25 (ESV) ... and as your days, so shall your strength be.

1. Promise: There will always be enough strength available no matter what

- A. On the good days there will be strength that is appropriate – on the evil days it will increase
 - 1). Whatever the devil or life throws at us God’s strength will enlarge to meet it

2. Why these promises were necessary for the Children of Israel

- A. Think about their situation as they came out of Egypt and traveled towards the promised land
 - 1). They would face many obstacles – there would be many evil days
 - 2). Opposed by numerous nations with well-trained, well-equipped armies
 - a). They would be out-numbered, out-armed, out-trained = odds greatly against them

Point: So God graciously comforts them in advance – just like he’s doing with us now

- A. He promises – whatever circumstances you face my grace will be sufficient
 - 1). On those particularly evil days my strength will enlarge so you can stand

Transition: Can we find Scriptural evidence that this is true? Yes. With our Lord

- A. We also see how that strength flowed into his life
 - 1). Remember he walked as a man – depending upon the same resources available to us

3. Example: Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane the night before the crucifixion

- A. **Background:** Jesus and his disciples had eaten the last supper the night before the cross
 - 1). After eating Jesus and the eleven go into the garden – Judas has left to betray our Lord
- B. Jesus leaves 8 behind with the instructions to *wait and pray*

- 1). Then takes Peter, James and John further

Mt 26:37–38 (ESV) And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. ⁽³⁸⁾ Then he said to them, **“My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.”**

- 2). Jesus goes a little further by himself and begins to pray

“My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not as I will but as you will.”

Thought: This was an *evil day* – where the events of the cross and temptation were crushing him

- 1). As he thought about bearing the sins of man – being mocked and forsaken by the Father
- 2). Think about the temptation – Remember how Satan tempted him in the wilderness

Mt 4:8–9 (ESV) Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁽⁹⁾ And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.”

- a). You don’t have to go to the cross – I’ll give you everything without it – the easy way
- b). Do you think the devil wouldn’t be taking full advantage of this moment

“You sure you want to do this? Think of nails being driven through your hands and feet! Are you ready for that? And who are you doing that for? Rebels! Those who have rejected your ways! They don’t care about you. Remember when you told that massive crowd what it meant to follow you and they all left except a handful of followers. You’re going to do this for them!”

- 1a). Imagine how strong the temptation would be at this point

It’s one thing to be tempted to forsake the cross 3 years before it happens

Quite another thing when you will be hanging on it the next day

- 2). The pressures so great it starts to push blood out through his pores
- C. After praying he returns to his disciples – rather than praying they have fallen asleep
 - 1). He rebukes them and then warns them – very important – remember this

“Keep watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.”

- D. This is repeated two more times – he separates himself and goes off to pray

“My Father if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.”

Question: What was happening while he was praying?

- A. Divine strength was being transferred into him
Divine strength that enabled him to stand on that evil day of intense pressure and temptation
- B. He was fighting the fight depending upon God’s strength
 - 1). And he was gaining that strength through prayer
- C. Jesus example teaches us a vital lesson about the command to be strong in the Lord
 - 1). We don’t sit passively waiting for God to do something
 - a). We do what we know we must do – the things we’ve been taught all our Christian life
 - 1a). We draw near to God through his Word and through prayer
 - 2). We pursue him – rely on him – seek him = as we do his strength is poured into us

E. Stanley Jones: Prayer is a time exposure of the soul to God.

- a). In prayer a transfer is taking place
 - 1a). His image is burned into our character – so that we become more like Christ
 - 2a). His strength is transferred to us so that we can stand
- D. But listen to what Jesus says if we don't pray

Luke 18:1 (ESV) And he told them a parable to the effect *that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.*

 - 1). The option is pray or lose heart – pray or become weak
Pray or panic - pray or become discouraged – pray or be defeated

Question: Can we prove this? Yes. Back to the garden

- A. Jesus is under such pressure he is sweating great drops of blood
He is praying “Father if it is possible take this cup from me.”
 - 1). He prays – the third time he gets off his knees – resolute – surrendered – victorious
 - 2). He moves without hesitation to the betrayal of Judas – arrest in the garden
And the events of the cross
 - 3). The battle against his own emotions – his reluctance were won in prayer
- B. But remember what he told his disciples

“Keep watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.”

 - 1). Jesus returned to them after praying and every time they were asleep
 - a). They didn't pray – did they fall? Yes!
Every one of them ended up betraying him in one way or another
 - b). Mark's account of the last supper – the night before the crucifixion
Mk 14:27 (ESV) And Jesus said to them, *“You will all fall away, for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’*
 - 2). Jesus was graciously trying to prepare them beforehand
 - a). I wonder how many times he does this with us – calls us to the Word and prayer
 - 1a). We neglect it and fall to the temptation he was trying to keep us from
 - b). They didn't pray – they weren't prepared – they crumbled on that evil day

Transition: The lesson here is so important – we see the balance in the Christian life

4. The balance in the Christian life

- A. Some believe it is all God – we are passive – “No worries God will do it all – relax”
Others think it is all about them and their discipline – stressed “Am I doing enough?”
- B. Truth is – the successful Christian life is a combination
 - 1). I stand against the devil's schemes in the strength of the Lord
But to experience that strength I must not neglect the means it flows into my life
 - a). The Word of God. Prayer. Church fellowship. Obedience
 - b). All those things that are commanded in the Bible
- C. A great example of this balance – God's part and ours is in 2 Peter

2 Pe 1:3–4 (ESV) His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁽⁴⁾ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

 - 1). His divine power has given us everything we need to live our Christian life out in a godly way
 - a). Everything we need to stand – to be victorious is granted to us
 - 2). But notice the balance in the next verse
2 Pe 1:5–8 (ESV) *For this very reason, make every effort* to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁽⁶⁾ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with

steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁽⁷⁾ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁽⁸⁾ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- 3). Like the way the NLT puts it

2 Pet 1:5 (NLT) *So make every effort to apply the benefits of these promises to your life.*

Point: God has made everything necessary available to you.

- A. Now make every effort to apply these benefits
- B. It's like a parent providing everything for their child's college education
- 1). What do they say?
- "I have done all I can. I have provided for your tuition, books, housing and food. For this very reason now apply yourself. Take advantage of all I've made available. Study hard..."
- C. If you come out of college stupid – that's on you
You didn't take advantage of the resources given to you
- 1). It's the same thing if you're so weak spiritually that you can't stand
God has given you everything you need
- a). But there is a massive number of Christians who don't take advantage and fall
- b). They read the Scriptures that told them about this war and how to stand in it
It doesn't affect them – they don't apply themselves
- D. Next week we are going to put on the armor – we need to understand this as a foundation
- 1). The church today has so protected grace that we don't talk about man's responsibility
- 2). It's true everything starts with God's grace
Christianity always begins with what God has done
But it moves to us and it brings a great responsibility – a necessary response
Rom 12:1 (NIV) Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, *to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God*--this is your spiritual act of worship.
- a). Because of what God has done – now give yourself to this – be all in
- Thought:** This is not speaking of a perfection – I'm talking about a direction
- A. To live a life aimed at God – depending upon him – living for him – relying on him
- 1). Taking his Word seriously – read it – understand it – apply it
- 2). There will still be failure – we get up repent – set our hearts on heaven again and move on
- B. For those who do this will know this strength that enables them to stand

Transition: Let's look at a couple examples

II. EXAMPLES OF STRENGTH ON THE EVIL DAY

1. Paul in Corinth: Acts 18

- A. He is under great difficulty – persecutions broken out – he's discouraged and downcast
- B. You see Paul's mindset in the way God comforts him
Ac 18:9–10 (ESV) And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, *"Do not be afraid,* but go on speaking and *do not be silent,* ⁽¹⁰⁾ for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people."
- 1). Paul was afraid of being attacked – he was tempted to be silent rather than evangelize - preach
- 2). Jesus comes to him – I'd be willing to bet it was during a time of prayer
- a). He encourages him – I'm with you – I'm in control
- C. Did it strengthen Paul? Look at v. 11
Ac 18:11 (ESV) And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

- 1). Went from wanting to leave and being tempted to be silent
 - a). To staying for a year and a half and proclaiming the word of God boldly
God strengthened him on that evil day he was being tempted to quit

Question: Has this ever happened to you?

- A. You're in a time of great crisis and difficulty – you need strength and God's been there?
 - 1). You pick up the Word – scripture speaks to you and you have victory
 - 2). You pray and you are given the courage to step into God's will
 - a). This is how God's power comes to us

2. Let me tell you about one of my heroes - the Word of God – and prayer

- A. Luther who was used to start the great reformation that stood against Catholic doctrine
 - 1). The Catholic church declaring a salvation by works
Luther standing against that teaching “Justification by faith in Christ alone”
- B. He was excommunicated from the Catholic church basically declaring him to be a heretic
 - 1). In 1521 he was called to Worms – to stand before the Roman Emperor Charles
 - a). He was expected to recant his writings and teaching
 - 2). We picture Luther as this hero – unaffected and unintimidated by anything or any one
 - a). Even is he was standing against the whole Roman empire and Catholic church
 - b). This isn't the way it happened
- C. On April 17, 1521 he stood in the center of the great hall before the emperor
 - 1). By his side was a table that contained his controversial books.
 - a). An official asked Luther if the books were his.
 - b). His reply was barely a whisper - “The books are all mine.”
 - 2). Then came the question they had gathered for – was Luther ready to recant those teachings
 - a). Again Luther answered almost inaudibly, “I beg you, give me time to think it over.”
 - b). The emperor granted the request - giving 24 hours for Luther to think it over
 - 3). Like Christ 1500 years earlier – Luther sought God in this evil day
 - a). Praying for the courage to stand alone before the might of Rome
 - b). That night he wrote this prayer

O God, Almighty God everlasting! how dreadful is the world! behold how its mouth opens to swallow me up, and how small is my faith in Thee!... Oh! the weakness of the flesh, and the power of Satan! If I am to depend upon any strength of this world—all is over.... The knell is struck.... Sentence is gone forth.... O God! O God! O thou, my God! help me against all the wisdom of this world. Do this, I beseech thee; thou shouldst do this ... by thy own mighty power.... The work is not mine, but Thine. I have no business here.... I have nothing to contend for with these great men of the world! I would gladly pass my days in happiness and peace. But the cause is Thine....*(sounds a bit like. “If it is possible take this cup from me. But thy will be done.”)* And it is righteous and everlasting! O Lord! help me! O faithful and unchangeable God! I lean not upon man. It were vain! Whatever is of man is tottering, whatever proceeds from him must fail. My God! my God! does thou not hear? My God! art thou no longer living? Nay, thou canst not die. Thou dost but hide Thyself. Thou hast chosen me for this work. I know it!... Therefore, O God, accomplish thine own will! Forsake me not, for the sake of thy well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ, my defence, my buckler, and my stronghold.

Lord—where art thou?... My God, where art thou?... Come! I pray thee, I am ready ... Behold me prepared to lay down my life for thy truth ... suffering like a lamb. For the cause is holy. It is thine own!... I will not let thee go! no, nor yet for all eternity! And though the world should be thronged with devils—and this body, which is the work of thine hands, should be cast forth, trodden under foot, cut in pieces, ... consumed to ashes, my

soul is thine. Yes, I have thine own word to assure me of it. My soul belongs to thee, and will abide with thee forever! Amen! O God send help!... Amen!

- D. Strengthened he returned to the hall the next day – the inquisitor demanded an answer
 “I ask you, Martin—do you or do you not repudiate your books and the errors which they contain?”
- 1). Luther replied:
 “Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason—I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other—my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.”

Thought: I think we think God’s power causes us to conquer easily all the time – no fight – no struggle

- A. Sometimes – but not always – the strength is enough for us to stand even when shaking
- 1). Martin Luther did not recant – even though the pressure was so intense
- 2). Why? He knew the Word and it directed him – He prayed and God sustained him
- a). The strength of God flowed through those two channels in his life
- b). And against the most powerful man on earth – the emperor
 And against the might of the Roman Catholic church – he stood

Transition: Sometimes this strength comes in the time of ministry

3. Ex. Peter and John speaking in the power of the Holy Spirit

- A. Acts 4 – Peter and John are arrested for preaching about Jesus – and put in jail
- 1). The next day they are brought before the religious leaders of Israel – including High Priest
- 2). They try their best to intimidate them
Ac 4:7 (ESV) And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, **(say this with a sneer)**
“By what power or by what name did you do this?”
- B. Notice what happens
Ac 4:8–10 (ESV) Then Peter, **filled with the Holy Spirit**, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders,
⁽⁹⁾ if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, ⁽¹⁰⁾ let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. **(He continues on – we’ll stop here)**
- 1). Notice the boldness – **“Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom you crucified”**
- 2). That is a supernaturally given courage and boldness to those following Christ
 A supernaturally given eloquence – putting together a powerful argument

Point: We are to be always filled with the Spirit – but there are times there is a greater evidence of that!

- A. Times when that filling becomes more apparent – a greater measure
- 1). Happens at times when witnessing – all of a sudden you feel lifted – empowered
 You’re listening to yourself speak – “That’s good” – the argument so sound
- 2). It happens when you preach
- a). Preaching is interesting – Spurgeon nothing worse than being left in the pulpit alone!
 But there is nothing more exciting when the Spirit empowers you – anoints you
- 1a). You feel like you’re being carried – there is power PLUS
- 2a). God is speaking through you – speaking to others through you
- B. It happens when you’re in a tricky situation
- 1). Example Viet Name:
- a). Two armed soldiers – rifles – good cop bad cop except without the good cop
- b). Suddenly total peace and boldness – I start witnessing to them
- 1a). Almost like – shut up Bill – what are you doing

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- 2a). But the Spirit was working – I was speaking – they were freaking
They basically ended up kicking me out
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CONCLUSION

1. Christianity is very interesting - we walk in this earth in another's power

- A. We walk with Almighty God living in us – moving us – lifting us
 - 1). Sometimes he says “You’re going to experience an extra helping” = going to supersize it
- B. Whatever we need to face temptation – to minister – he will provide
 - 1). But we saw with Jesus and with Martin Luther that flows into our life through means
 - 2). Why we go to the homeless – Spectrum – prayed up - prepared
 - a). Why we have a prayer meeting happening while we’re out
We understand the balance – God’s power comes through means

2. Brothers and sisters the power is there

2 Pe 1:3–4 (ESV) His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁽⁴⁾ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

- A. Now
 - 2 Pet 1:5 (NLT)** *So make every effort to apply the benefits of these promises to your life.*
 - 1). Get both those lined up and the Christian life is exciting – victorious
 - 2). But neglect either one and the Christian life is a bit boring – defeat is no fun