

Be Strong in the Lord

Ephesians 6:10

In Chs 1-3 Paul explained who we **are** & what we **have** in Christ Jesus. Predestined, adopted, redeemed, forgiven, grace lavished upon us, sealed w/ H.S., seating in heavenly places, saints & citizens of heaven, spiritual gifts given, Joint-heirs w/ Christ, every spiritual blessing in heavenly places given to us, etc.—Because of who we **are** & what we **have** (our riches)—Paul says **walk** in a manner worthy of your calling ch 4:1; to ch 6. He lists the many ways we are to walk, *practical Christianity*—in love, unity, in spirit not in flesh, in your gifting, not as children tossed by winds of doctrine but as mature believers, walk as Jesus walked, not in drunkenness, but in joy & thankfulness, etc

As Paul concludes his letter, he says *finally*, putting emphasis on what he's about to say. It's **important** & *special*, of **unique concern**. He realizes we may have the **best instruction** & **right intentions**, we may **start out strong** in our Christian faith, **running the race w/ endurance** only to be **lured away** & **fall away** because our adversary the **devil** & the weakness of our **flesh**. Jesus said to the disciples *the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak—devil's asked permission to sift you as wheat, Peter*.

So Paul points out a great danger in the Christian walk--It's not a cakewalk, or bed of roses, *'it's a battle ground not a play ground.'* The devil seeks to **turn us away**, **bring us down**, **trip us up**. So we need strength that is not our own—but divine power to endure temptation & defeat the enemy. Before putting on armor of God we need to know who the enemy is—

When WW1 broke out the war ministry in London sent a coded message to one of the British outposts in a rural area of Africa. It read: 'War declared. Arrest all enemy aliens in your district.' The war ministry received a prompt reply: 'Have arrested 10 Germans, 6 Belgians, 4 Frenchmen, 2 Italians, 3 Austrians and one American. Please advise immediately who we're at war with?'

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Eph 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might.

How do we know when we are walking in God's strength & not our own? Is there evidence to recognize His strength is now in control & not mine? Is it like putting the car in **cruise control** & we do nothing, just enjoy the ride? Let's look at what it means---*strong in the Lord*.

First of all understand, God is ready & willing to give us His strength for any situation we face. Paul prayed previously that the central factor of our life would be the HS power.

Eph 3:16-17 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

The **inner** man is the deepest part of our being from which all else flows. The place personality is formed, the core of existence, affecting **mood, attitude, disposition, morality**—inner man vs. **outer** man.

The outer can affect the inner if we let it. You can act in an evil, angry, carnal way & it affects us inside all day long.

2 Cor 4:16....we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. We can change the outside hair, grow beard, make up, cosmetic surgery, weight, piercing, tattoo, color contacts, etc. Only HS changes inside.

Nestles Grk lit *finally, finally*....be **strong** is **en-doo-nam-o'-o** to empower, be enabled from the root **dunamis** or **dynamite**. It's an empowering outside of ourselves. The exhortation to **be strong in the Lord in the strength of His might** is given in the context of a continual empowering of H.S. Why?

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Because believers are prone to lose heart, grow weak, get discouraged at things life throws at them. Paul writes from prison 3:13. We are *leaky vessels* & God's power tends to *leak out when trouble comes*. So we need constant replenishing. So '*...be ye being filled w/ the Holy Spirit*'. 5:18.

It's easy to lose heart when expectations turn to disappointments. When the **real** condition, *what we are*, does not match the **ideal** condition, *what we wanted to be*. What we thought would happen never does. We get discouraged because we disappoint ourselves or are disappointed by others we depended upon. Or circumstances take a turn against us.

At this point we need strength outside of ourselves. Need power to go on to do God's will. No reserve, on empty, *gurgling sound—Volvo*.

Joe DiMaggio, the great Hall of Fame home run hitter for the NY Yankees once asked his teammate, Lefty Gomez how to answer sportswriters when they asked him *where his great power came from, what should he say*. Lefty told him, 'Don't worry about that, *it's when they ask you where your great power went*, is when it's time to worry.

You can't assume that since God's power filled you yesterday, that you will always be filled w/ His power. *Samson 'I will go out as other times....but he knew not that the Lord had departed from him'*.

The inner man is like a car engine needs oil-we need oil of HS. When oil flows freely the engine runs smoothly and w/ power. *No oil, black smoke, engine freeze--*

Why would God give me His power-*I'm not worthy!* He does it *'according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us'* 1:8

J.I. Packer-Where grace exists it reigns, it is the dominant factor in the situation.

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God delights to give to His children out of His goodness & grace. Not expecting to be paid back or compensated. What He does is because of Who He is '*riches of His glory*'. God's grace reigns in all He does for us. It's His greatest joy to impart His goodness, grace & gifts to us. He does it in such a way that we don't have the capacity to pay Him back. Otherwise we might try to & it would spoil who God is.

John Newton was once a corrupt sea Captain who was a slave trader. After his conversion he wrote the song Amazing Grace. He once said 'when I get to heaven I shall see three wonders there. **First**, to see many people I did not expect to see. **Second**, to miss many people I expected to see and **third**, the greatest wonder of all will be to find myself there'. **That is grace.**

We are often surprised when God lavishes His grace upon us.

Andrew Murray-Grace is God's compassion on the unworthy

When Paul says be strong, it is w/ the expectation that it is God's will for us. As in 3:16 '*that He would **grant** you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through the Holy Spirit...* It is God's plan & will for every believer. So expect it, watch for it, wait to receive it. We can **quench** the HS by neglect or apathy. Or **grieve** Him because of formalism & false humility. Ahaz king of Judah did. He had the opportunity to experience God's grace & power but instead quenched God's spirit.

Isa 7:10-13 Then the LORD spoke again to Ahaz, saying,

11 "Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; make it deep as Sheol or high as heaven."

12 But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!"

13 Then he said, "Listen now, O house of David! Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well?"

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False humility & formalism kept Ahaz from experiencing all that God had for him. He was rebuked instead. It offends God when we don't take Him at His word. When we substitute our feelings, willfulness, our ways for His word to us. Or worse we are too preoccupied or lazy to act when God speaks. **So we fall into temptation & sin.**

God is willing to make us '*strong in the Lord*' to give us the '*strength of His might*' to be '*strengthen w/ power by the Holy Spirit*'.

But there is our **part**, '*be strong*' faith **part** '*so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.*' My part is believing that God will do all He said He will do. Receiving the power of HS in my life. **How?** Walk by faith not sight. Trust Him not emotions don't look at the outward but I look upward.

Rom 8:24-25 *For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one also hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.*

If we saw all we would not need faith—As the sun was setting a father, working in the cellar, heard his little son's call *come to dinner daddy*. As the boy peered into the dark basement he couldn't see his father yet from the cellar, the last rays of the setting sun marked the boys silhouette. The father said *I'm right here jump and I'll catch you. But I can't see you daddy. It's ok* said the father *I can see you.*

In NT faith & believe appears 500 times. Critical words for Christians.

Heb 11:6 *And w/o faith it is impossible to please Him for he who comes to God must believe that He is, & that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.*

God honors faith not good looks, great personality, dogged determination, a sweet disposition

Heb 10:39 *But we are not of those who shrink back(lose heart) to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.*

12 spies Nu 13:2 '*spy out the land which I am going to give to the sons of Israel*'—**10 spies**...*the people are too strong and the cities fortified and very large, and there are giants in the land, we are like grasshoppers in our own sight and theirs. Doubt says 'we've had it-can't do it'...Bad report—so they wandered in the wilderness 40 years...lost heart...shrunk back.*

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Faith says *'they've had it-we can do it'* Joshua & Caleb...*it is an exceedingly good land, don't fear the people they will be our prey, their protection has been removed, the Lord is with us do not fear them.*

All saw the same thing, 10 thru eyes of unbelief, 2 thru eyes of faith. *Our faith is only as big as our God*. If our God is smaller than our giants than doubt will run our life. If our God is bigger than any giant problems, crisis situations then faith rules our life. My part is faith, Gods part is to fulfill His promises.

Jesus said to His disciples *'follow me'*. He got into a boat & told them to row to the other side. He went to sleep in the stern. **No faith needed yet, leisurely cruise across Galilee**. But then the seas rose & their faith didn't, Jesus was there.

Matt 8:26 And He said to them, "Why are you timid, you men of little faith?" Then He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and it became perfectly calm.

Mk-'no faith' Lk-'where is your Matt- 'little faith'.

Life can be like a storm-we either panic or pray-trust or reach for Prozac. Jesus said *'I will never leave you or forsake you-I am w/ you always even to the end'*

Have faith is not just a statement, it's a step. No matter what's happening around me I chose to believe. I step out in faith to meet life's daily situations. Circumstances don't move me from my position of faith.

Faith grows in the soil of adversity. God promises to strengthen the inner man. When trials, temptations, adversity screams *'this can't be the will of God for my life'*, God says I here & have all under control I give strength for today. I never promised to take you out of difficulties but to give you strength to endure the difficulty.

Luke 11:11-13 "Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? "Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"

Not only strength but bring good out of them all...**Rom 8:28 And we know (Faith) that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.**