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## Stand Strong Ephesians 6:10-11

**Intro:** This last major section of Paul's letter to the Ephesians seems to appear rather abruptly after the Apostle's explanation of the Christian (or Spirit-filled) household code. This shift in focus is so drastic that scholars and Bible interpreters are forced to acknowledge it deal with it. But, on closer examination, the novelty of this change in focus need not be exaggerated too much. First of all, if the household code of 5:22-6:9 is simply the result of practically applying the exhortation of 5:15 (walk circumspectly...as wise), then we can say our current text is concerned with how believers stand (6:11, 13-14). Christians are to conduct themselves (walking) according to wisdom (5:15), while also embracing a secure position (our standing) which is in direct opposition to the forces of evil arrayed against us.

In fact, you could outline the entire letter according to the believer's position in Christ. Christianity begins by sitting with Christ in the heavenly places (2:6), that is, resting in Christ's achievements. It continues by walking out the Christian life (4:1) or, living Christianity practically. Finally, it involves standing on ground that Christ has already won for us (11, 13-14).

Secondly, while the focus of our text may seem different, it actually contributes to the prophetic view of the epistle that was established in 1:20-22. There, Paul presents Christ as being already seated above all principality and power with everything subjected to Him. And yet, despite this truth, our text reveals that believers will still be forced to deal with wicked spiritual forces who are dead set to oppose our every obedient move. So, Christ is already victorious over evil even while malevolent spiritual forces continue to operate against Him and His church.

Thirdly, our text directly connects to the letter's major theme of union with Christ. Believers are to be strengthened in the Lord and put on the full armor of God – the very same armor that our Messiah wears into battle. In other words, believers are to take their position standing against the forces of evil through their union with Christ as they share in His strength and armor. As one author put it (Jipp), "by virtue of its union with the resurrected-enthroned Messiah the church is strengthened with God's resurrection power to do

battle against its enemies.” Obviously, as far as Paul is concerned, the warfare that we as Christians face is both serious and important. These verses are the culmination of this amazing letter and the point on which they end is that each Christian is engaged in a great spiritual battle and they must be properly equipped for it.

The problem with today’s Christianity is that too many believers have a distorted view or improper understanding of spiritual warfare, oftentimes in the same denomination. Some sections of the church place an undo focus on spiritual warfare, looking for a devil behind every door or a rebellious demon under every rock. They’re always casting out something or calling out something and by much prayer and consternation, constantly cultivating that coveted “hedge of protection.” I used to mildly scoff at the idea of such a hedge, wondering if there were special trimmers supplied to keep it looking neat. But the idea does come from Scripture. In fact, that was Satan’s complaint to God about Job, “have You not made a hedge around him...” So, on one hand, I’m for anything that makes the devil complain. On the other hand, God cut that hedge away pretty quick to prove to Satan that his complaint was unfounded.

Truly though, the vast majority of Christians lean to the polar opposite of this view by judging that the teaching of our text is unimportant. They would encourage us to think positively and peacefully, as if there were no spiritual battles at all. They see Christianity not as an entrance into warfare but as an exit from it. They see it as the solution to our problems. If you’re sick, Jesus will make you well. If you’re discouraged, Jesus will make you happy. You get the impression from those who talk like this that to believe in Jesus is to walk along a smooth path and to enjoy only smooth sailing but that idea is taught nowhere in Scripture and rarely, if ever, realized in the true Christian walk.

Another variation of this faulty concept doesn’t so much as deny the reality of spiritual warfare as it insists that, although it does exist, it’s all over and done with in a certain sense. Those who hold this view tend to emphasize that, because of Christ’s victories our warfare is always a defensive struggle rather than offensive. While this is not too far out in left field, the danger of this way of thinking has been carried over into expressions of what it means to live the Christian life which suggest that there is nothing (or at least very little) for us to do as Christians. “Let go and let God,” some say. That is, the

battle is not ours; it's God's. So just let go; let God do the fighting. At the most, you need only stand your ground. It's true; Paul does use the word stand; uses it 4 times. But when he speaks of our armor he speaks not only of defensive armor such as our helmet, breastplate, and shield, but also of our offensive weapon, our sword. And whether or not he's thinking of fighting offensively or defensively, he's thinking of fighting against the most powerful and cunning foes.

From Paul's demeanor in these verses it should be clear that the Christian walk is not a spectator sport. We're not called to stand idly by and watch as Christ's victory takes hold in our lives and the lives of those around us. We are to be willing participants in the spiritual battle that has engulf the church, first on an individual level as well as on a corporate level as the Body of Christ. And yet, if we are honest, we know we're not up to the fight. What are we to do then? The proper balance is found in the first 2 verses, which contain 2 commands (10: be strong -11: Put on). We're reminded by this combination of commands that we're unequal to the battle. We have no strength; our strength must come from the Lord. Still, empowered with His strength, we're to fight the spiritual forces that are arrayed against us.

We should understand that this struggle is inevitable, given that the first 5 chapters of Ephesians expounds upon the purposes of God, while our text reveals the existence of a devil who is opposed to those purposes. Is it God's plan to create a new society within the confines of His church? Then these hostile spiritual forces will do their dead level best to destroy that society. Has God through Jesus Christ broken down the walls dividing human beings of different races and cultures from each other? Then the devil through his emissaries will stop at nothing to rebuild them. Does God intend for His reconciled and redeemed people to live together in harmony and purity? Then the powers of hell will scatter among them the seeds of discord and sin.

The very fact that Paul follows his beautiful and uplifting portrait of peaceful Christian homes and happy Christian relations (5:22-6:9) with this stark description of warfare shows us that even these things will not be achieved without conflict. Clearly the victories of the Christian life are to be achieved by a relentless and lifelong struggle against evil. And even then they are only realized to the extent that we avail ourselves of God's armor.

**10** – Finally – This is such a wonderful word! Especially if you have been sitting in a pew for a while and the speaker has gone long and you're fighting off the "nods." I've been in church all my life and there's no more encouraging word to hear from the pulpit as "Finally." No matter how "far afield" your mind has wandered or how deep into REM you've drifted, when you hear that word, your ears prick up and your eyes pop open because you know it signals a blessed and inevitable conclusion! But, while Paul is bringing out his last point of the letter, this was not the time for his Ephesian listeners to start folding their notes, clicking their pens and zipping up their Bible covers. Paul is almost finished but his last point is just as important as all the others and maybe even more so.

Rather than just flagging the conclusion of the letter, Paul's "finally" is actually a hint that what follows is directly related to the theological argument of the letter up to this point. By using this word, Paul is telling us that he is about to speak in light of everything he has previously said. In the preceding chapters, Paul has carefully established the believer's place in Christ Jesus and then he has laid out the basics of the Christian walk. So, in light of all that God has done for us; in light of the glorious standing we have as God's children; in light of God's great plan for the ages that He has made us part of; in light of the plan for Christian maturity and growth He gives us; in light of the conduct God calls every believer to live; in light of the filling of the Spirit and our walk with the Spirit; in light of all this – there is still a battle to fight in the Christian life.

The very first thing Paul instructs in preparation for this battle is that believers (his brethren) are to be strong in the Lord. Notice that Paul doesn't say be made strong by the Lord as if believers are to passively wait around until God has properly strengthened them for the fight. No, Paul exhorts each believer to strengthen themselves in the Lord. This strengthening is just as much an active endeavour on our part as is the taking up of God's armor in v**11**. It is likely that Paul got this concept from **1 Sam 30:6** which says that "David strengthened himself in the Lord his God."

This was just after David and his men were rejected from fighting with the Philistines by the Philistine kings. It seems that while David and his men were gone from their home town another group of raiders came through and carried off all the people and possessions. When they arrived at the new ghost town, the men were so distraught that they openly discussed the

possibility of stoning David right then and there. But, David didn't run and he didn't fight; he turned to the Lord and found the strength he needed to carry on. How did he find such strength? The text doesn't say but we can surmise that he could have simply remembered God's love that had been shown to him many times over. He could have remembered God's promise and calling (anointed future king). He could have remembered God's past deliverances. All of these or just one of these could have served to inspire strength in David at his lowest point.

The detailed teaching of spiritual warfare in our text presents 2 essential components: be strong in the Lord and put on the whole armor of God. Both are necessary for success but too much of modern teaching on Christian combat overly emphasizes the armor at the expense of strength. This is a recipe for disaster! If you take a weak man who can barely stand and you put the best armor that money can buy on him, he will still be an ineffective soldier! Remember when David volunteered to take on Goliath; Saul commanded to let David use his armor. David couldn't move in it. Saul was a large man and David was just a teenager. Instead of protecting David, Saul's armor would have gotten him killed!

In the same way, a Christian who has not been strengthened in the Lord will be easily beaten. Proper equipping for Christian combat begins with being strengthened in the Lord. In today's military, before a soldier is given a weapon or shown how to fire a missile, they must go through basic training. One of the primary reasons for basic training is to build up the recruit's physical strength. It's the military's way of saying, "Soldier, we're going to give you the best weapons and top of the line armor possible. But first, we have to make sure you are strong and that you can use what we give you effectively." Advanced weapons are great but if you're not strong enough to wield them correctly, they are at best, useless and at worst, dangerous.

Paul goes on to provide further details as to the location of the source of our strength – in the power of His might! Ok, but how do we acquire this strength? Of course, this doesn't happen just by saying the words. This power and might is not accessed through repeating some incantation or spell. You can't just constantly walk around saying, "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might" and expect it to just happen. That type of mental games may accomplish something in your own consciousness but that's certainly not what Paul is driving at here. How to we acquire this

strength? The same way we acquire anything from the Lord – by faith!

Might is inherent power or force. A body-builder's large muscles display their might, even if they're not using them. It is their reserve of strength. Power is the exercise of might. When a strong man uses his might to bend an iron bar or lift a large weight, he's using his power. The reserve of strength is actually in operation. Our God possesses vast reservoirs of might that can be realized and manifested as power in our Christian lives. But His might doesn't work in me as I sit passively. His might works in me as I rely on it and step out and do the work, fight the battle. I can rely on His might and do no work and I can do work without relying on His might but both of these fall far short of God's plan for my life. I must rely on His might and step out to do the good work He has called me to do.

It's not, "I do everything and God does nothing." It's not "I do nothing and God does everything." It's not even, "I do all I can and God helps with what I can't." Each of these attitudes falls short. The key is for me to by faith rely on His might - and through practice rely on it more and more – and then step out and do the work. I'd venture to say that most believers have received a fair amount of the available might of God but, like water in a bucket full of holes, they have wasted their strength. You can waste it by being over-committed or under-committed (laziness). You can waste it by engaging in useless arguments and debates (cast pearls before swine). You can waste it by spending too much time in the wrong company, expending too much effort chasing the American dream or by indulging too much in ungodly entertainment.

The quickest way to find oneself without God's power is to have a wrong attitude toward or doubt the Word of God! Yes, our strength comes from the Lord but how do we learn of it? What do we draw strength from? We draw strength from what God has revealed of Himself to us through His Word. If we take His Word lightly, we'll find that we have no strength in the midst of the battle. Everything Paul has given us in this letter should give us strength. Just the fact that the Father has put all things under Jesus' feet (1:22) should give us the confidence to stand up and resist all advances of the forces of evil around us. Yes, our strength comes from the Lord but the knowledge of that strength comes from God's Word.

**-11a** – The purpose of being strengthened in the Lord is so that we may be



able to put on the whole armor of God. God's armor will be explained in greater detail in subsequent verses but the emphasis here is on the whole armor of God. God provides the believer with a fully functional and complete set of equipment and He sends us out to battle with everything we need at our disposal. The exhortation to put on God's armor suggests the notion of sharing. It implies a real sense of participation or union between the believer and the Lord. Not only are we to access His strength but we are to put on His armor as well. We're not in this fight alone! He not only provides for our every need but He's also with us in the fight, declaring His victory over the enemy and inviting us to walk by faith in that victory!

This armor is of God both in the sense that it is from Him and in the sense that it is His actual armor. In the OT, it is the Lord who wears the armor ([Isa 59:17](#)). He now desires to share that armor with us. This ancient Greek word for armor is used in only one other place in the NT – in [Lk 11:21-22](#). Jesus speaks of the strong man who is fully armed but is stripped of all his armor when a stronger one comes and defeats him. We know from [Col 2:15](#) that Jesus has already disarmed all principalities and power. So, being strengthened in the Lord's might and being suited up in the Lord's armor, it's no wonder that Paul can say in [Rom 8:37](#) that we are more than conquerors!

**11b** – We are strengthened in the Lord so we can wear the Lord's armor; but we wear the Lord's armor so that we will be able to stand against the forces of evil. Satan and all of his forces of evil are actively scheming against each believer as well as the entire Body of Christ but those schemes come to nothing when we stand against them in the power of God. Satan's plan of attack alternates between intimidation and insinuation. If he can't bully you he will attempt to beguile you. He will tempt you with your heart's desire and then condemn you for falling for his tricks. He employs force or fraud as his chief offensive tactics against the people of God.

More will be said on the subject of our great enemy in the next verse but our job as believers is to resist the devil, to stand against all the nonsense that he throws our way. But not in our own strength! By this time we should be able to see that everything that is given to us to make our victory possible is from Christ. Is it truth ([14](#))? He's the truth; He's the one who said, I am the way, the truth and the life ([Jn 14:6](#)). Is it righteousness ([14](#))? He's our righteousness. Paul writes, Christ . . . who became for us wisdom from

God—and righteousness, holiness and redemption (1 Cor 1:30). Is it the gospel (15)? The gospel is the gospel of Christ (Mk 1:1). Is it faith (16)? It is faith in Him (Gal 2:20). Salvation (17)? Christ is our salvation; He achieved it by His death on the cross (Acts 4:10-12). Even prayer is by the channel that He's opened up for us (Heb 10:19-20). Not one of us can stand against the spiritual forces of evil in our own strength—not even for a moment. But in Christ we can fight on to victory, His victory.

Just a couple of further points: 1) this passage alerts us to the real nature of our struggle against sin and evil in the world. We're quick to associate sin with sinners and evil with certain individuals but we should realize and consider that in every instance, there is more there than meets the eye. The forces of evil that are arrayed against us live in an unseen world and they hold sway over the vast majority of the earth's population. Yes, there are limits to their evil but most of those limitations are the result of Christian theology and its influence over Western culture but even that is rapidly deteriorating.

2) While it is natural to apply the various elements of armor and weaponry in the passage to the individual believer, the strong emphasis that Paul has revealed throughout his letter has been on the collective people of God as the Body of Christ. So, it's not too far fetched to imagine that the Body as a whole is to wear the armor of God in battle against the enemy. Collectively, the Body of Christ is to stand against Satan clothed in the full armor of God. This doesn't exclude application to the individual believer; it actually depends on it. But, what the Bible says to individuals, it also says to the church. We, as a body of believers, are to be strengthened in the Lord; we are to put on the whole armor of God and we are to faithfully stand against the wiles of Satan. We must be doing this in our personal walks and we must be holding each other accountable within the fellowship of this body.

