

It's Time for Strength

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Bible Verse: Ephesians 6:10-11
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We have the privilege tonight of extending further our discussion of the glory of God that we've been looking at over the past three times that we've gathered together, seeing the preeminence of the priority of the glory of God and how it plays out in our lives, and last time we saw that there's a supernatural foe to our efforts to glorify God. We saw how Satan is opposed and saw illustrations from Eve and Job, from Peter and Paul and the Lord Jesus Christ, showing us how those who are seeking after the glory of God in one manner or another are faced with this supernatural opposition to their efforts to glorify God, and it brings up an important question about what the church is to do and what the church is to be like and what the church is to focus on, and I would frame the question for you like this: if the church does not glorify God, who will? Who will give themselves to ascribing honor and praise to our most worthy Creator, the Redeemer of his people, who will glorify God if the church does not? The glory of God does not matter at all to sinners, and if the truth be told, the glory of God does not even matter to most people who claim to be Christians, but as we've seen over these past couple of weeks, the glory of God is supremely important in the heavenly spheres and Scripture makes it plain that it is the goal of all of creation that all things are from him, and to him, and that all things would be to his glory forever. And so we need to have our mindset completely reprogrammed in some cases to what really matters and why it is that you and I even exist. What is our purpose? Our purpose is supremely to glorify God.

Now that matters, all of that matters as we come to Ephesians 6 for our text and we'll be looking at this text for the next few weeks both on Sunday and Tuesday, but our text for tonight is simply Ephesians 6:10-11, if you'll look at that with me. Ephesians 6:10 and 11 and we might as well read verse 12 as well. The Apostle Paul after setting forth the doctrine and the duty of the Christian life, brings things to a close. He brings it to a climax as he comes to verse 10 and he says to his readers,

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Now let me kind of frame our entrance into this text in this way. The spiritual battle over the glory of God often plays out in the realm of earth. So for example, in the life of Job that we looked at ever so briefly last time, we see that there was a spiritual accusation made by Satan against Job in the courts of God, and at the core of the challenge was over the glory of God. Satan, in essence paraphrasing says, "Job serves You simply because You are so good to him. You are not intrinsically worthy of his worship and we can prove this, that if You remove the blessings Job will cease being faithful to You." And so God in order to prove the point, allows Satan to attack Job in vicious ways that reveal to us the sadistic ways of our foe, but my point for tonight is this proving of the glory of God took place in the realm of earth. And here's what you and I need to think about this evening as we think about the days in which we live, God often, if not usually, displays his strength and makes his glory known through his weak and outnumbered people. God makes his glory known through his weak and outnumbered people so that man does not have the ability, cannot claim that it was his strength that won the battle at hand, because by human measure, by human comparison, there is no human explanation for the victory.

So just to give you a few little examples without even turning to Scripture to kind of orient your mind to these things, God glorified his name through Abraham in calling him out of the land of Ur. He glorified his name through the nation Israel and made a great point repeatedly throughout the Old Testament of saying, "I did not call you because you were great in number but because you were the least in number." You might remember the story of how God won a battle through Gideon and his 300 men. He reduced the size of the army from 22,000 down to 10,000, down to 300 men in order to prove the point that it was his power not numerical strength that enabled the battle to be won. God proved his glory, he proved his power when he brought his people through the wilderness. He proved his power when he sent them into exile and then when he brought them back from exile. Think of the book of Nehemiah, for example. God established his strength and established his glory by launching the Gospel through 12 ordinary men, mostly fishermen. How can the Gospel spread throughout all of the world through men who had no political influence and had not educational background to support them in their teaching ministry. God glorified his name and manifested his power supremely in the weakness of the cross of Christ. It was in the weakness of the cross, it was in the crucifixion of our Lord that redemption was accomplished for his people, that forgiveness was secured, the ransom price was paid and it was paid not in the glory that we will one day see in the Second Coming, it was done in the weakness of the humanity and the crucifixion of Christ.

We have to think about these things from a completely different perspective. This is not the worldly way to do things and God in the course of church history manifests his power, manifested his glory through the persecuted church. If you study the early centuries of Christianity, you'll see 10 different waves of persecution of varying degrees of severity that the Roman emperors brought upon the names of those who claim the name of Christ. Nero being one of the worst of them, was a man who crucified Christians after he had first encased them in wax, crucified them and then set them on fire in order to light his gardens in a display of his sadistic and twisted mind.

Now through all of that, beloved, we see God prevailing to glorify his name and prevailing in terms of human weakness. Now as I have said often in the past several weeks, I think that we're in a time like that in our day. This is why I wanted to come to Ephesians 6. And I've said these things and I'll just rehearse them ever so briefly just so that you understand why I'm seeing things in these categories in the present time. If you had access, if you knew the things that we see in ministry, we know that there are a lot of difficulties in our families here even within our church here today. There's sorrow. There's conflict. There's grieving. There's difficulties. These things matter and it's an indication, we're finding that it is difficult to live for the glory of God in the midst of these kinds of challenges. The sorrows that some are going through are incomprehensible to imagine. Covid-19, if I hear one more thing about Covid-19, I think I'm going to gag which means I'm destined to gag, right, because this is all around us. Black Lives Matter and protests and riots, we spoke of that a few weeks ago. Political agitation. And in the midst of this, you know, we lose sight of the fact that it's only within the past five years that our United States Supreme Court mandated the recognition of homosexual marriage throughout our entire country and homosexuality and transgenderism are now just accepted terms, accepted categories of thought in complete contradiction to what Scripture would say about those matters, and we've taught on all of those things at length. And you know, five years is a very short period of time and what we're finding is there is just wave after wave after wave of these assaults of ungodly teaching, of ungodly behavior, of ungodly thinking, of difficulties within our own lives, and it just becomes a billowing dark cloud that just threatens to unleash a thunderstorm of sorrow and difficulty and crisis upon us all.

These things have come upon us quickly, much of it within the past four months, some of it just going back a few more years, but all of it coming quickly and all of a sudden we find ourselves in the midst of a battlefield, in the midst of a spiritual war where there are just multiple fronts that are being engaged that are far more than any one person could begin to manage on his own. Especially in the recent months, the sudden and unexpected waves of change and challenge that have come upon us, the sequence and the one right after another reminds me of what Job experienced in Job 1. This has all the marks of a spiritual conflict that is going on, and the way that people have just so quickly drunk it all in and embraced, you know, a demonstrably unbiblical movement like Black Lives Matter and embracing it as the touchstone for future society has all the earmarks of a spiritual conflict.

Now that's just by way of introduction for the point that I want to make because I'm here to talk about the church tonight, not the world. The world is just simply the occasion upon which we are going to find ourselves giving glory to God. But here's what I see and I'm speaking far beyond the walls of Truth Community Church with what I'm about to say. You know, the Lord has given me friends in ministry in a lot of different places and so I talk with a lot of different people in different realms. This is what it seems to me is happening, that some of the people of God if not many of the people of God, and it's not that we're exempt from it within the walls of Truth Community Church, I just want you to know that I'm not targeting anybody internally with the things that I'm about to say even if it does apply, some of the people of God are giving way to fear. Others are giving way

to anger. Others to discouragement and giving in to the conflict. And people like that misunderstand the nature of the battle, my friends. When they give in to all of those carnal ways of responding, they are misunderstanding the nature of the battle and you can see that they misunderstand the nature of the battle by the tools that they try to use to fight them. They turn to their social media posts and argue about whatever restrictions are that they dislike. They want to fight the battle in the realm of politics. They rely on self rather than God and it's evident by the fact that there is no evidence of godly thought, no evidence of Christ in what they say, no sense of confidence in the future of what will happen based on a confidence that God is sovereign and in control of all of these things. And so they show that they misunderstand the nature of the battle at the very least, and furthermore, furthermore as I speak about those kinds of people, none of them, my friends, none of them give any thought to the reality that even if everything that they were arguing for succeeded and they got everything that they wanted today in regards to what's happening in the world around them, none of them give any thought to the fact that it can all be lost tomorrow. It can be lost in the next election and different people are in power. It can be lost when the next virus comes or the next natural disaster hits us. We simply in speaking, identifying with those people in what I'm about to say though I don't agree with it at all, we simply lose sight of the fact of what Hebrews 13 says, that here we have no lasting city. We do not have what is permanent in what we have here on earth. James says in James 4, you don't know what your life will be like tomorrow.

And so, my friends, now speaking within the walls of Truth Community Church, speaking to this blessedly supportive congregation that desires the word of God, what you and I have to see is that that can't possibly be the response of the church, of the people of God who are dedicated to the glory of God. As I'll say a time or two more before this series is over, we cannot put out demonic fires with political squirt guns. That is not where the battle lies. And so people fight and get agitated in the wrong areas but that's not the only way that you can show that the battle is not being properly engaged, and I say this with a measure of sympathy and yet it needs to be said, that there are others who withdraw from the battle completely. They withdraw in fear or they withdraw in selfishness. They leave the battle for others to fight. They walk away. They go AWOL and suddenly you don't see them by your side to fight the battle anymore. They leave and they object because they don't want to fight the battle in the right way. They leave because they cannot define the terms of engagement. If it's not their way, it's the highway for them. Remember I'm speaking beyond the walls of Truth Community Church in addition to within the walls in what I'm saying here. And so they leave their battle armor on the battlefield and they turn and they walk away from it and leave it for someone else to fight.

Well, beloved, for us, speaking corporately, that's not the way we're gonna do it. That's not how we're going to respond here, and we're going to find the terms of our response in our text tonight in Ephesians 6. And tonight's message is not going to be a matter of practical things that we ought to do, that may come later in the series, tonight what you have to find and tonight what we need to do is we need to have, we need to know what the mindset for this battle is to be. This is about girding up our minds for battle and understanding how it is that a biblical Christian faces times like this.

That's what we want to see and so let me just look at verses 10 and 11 with you again where it says,

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

So with that first word, "Finally," Paul is signaling that he's reaching the conclusion of his letter and he's bringing into focus all that he has said about doctrine and duty. You'll remember, we won't look at the passages because we've seen them so often I'm confident that they're starting to cement themselves in your mind, he has said that salvation is to the praise of the glory of his grace. To the praise of the glory of his grace. To the praise of the glory of his grace. And in chapter 3, verse 21, he says glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen. And so the glory of God is at stake and then he works out the practical implications of that in things that affect a lot of areas of church and personal life, but what we find is this, this is what we need to understand and really to embrace even if it seems uncomfortable for us, is that what Paul is saying is that this battle, this life devoted to the glory of God is often going to be a struggle. It is going to be difficult. We will have difficulty battling our own human flesh and the remnants of sin within us. We will have difficulty dealing with a world environment that is designed in all of its aspects to pull us away and distract us from this. And in terms of what he says here in verse 11, we find that there's an invisible spiritual dimension to it all.

Now that might sound intimidating. That might sound discouraging. You might say, "Well, I can see then why people would leave and go AWOL in the battle." But that's not at all what we are to do and it's not at all what Scripture teaches us. To the contrary, Scripture teaches us and Paul specifically in this extended passage in Ephesians 6 tells us and cuts through the smoke of the battle to tell us that we are sufficient in Christ for the task at hand. God has given us all of the resources that we need to be a valiant soldier in the battle, that one that can be an instrument of his glory, and that we can overcome the devil, overcome the temptations, overcome the world, overcome false Christians, we can overcome that and succeed in the task that the Lord has given us. And so while it's a sober call to battle, it is a trumpet call for us to recognize that God has given us everything that we need in the multifaceted conflict that we find ourselves in.

And you know, Scripture says do not ask why things were better in the olden days because it's not from wisdom that you ask this. The temptation especially for those of us that are a little bit further in life, is to look back and say, "Well, I wish it was like it used to be, you know, before all of these other things happened." And my friends, both you watching at home and those of you here in the audience, here's what I want you to see: that is a lethal way to think that is contrary to everything that we're talking about here today. You and I should not think that way and we should not have longings in our heart that way, to wish for the old days because, my friend, here is the way that we need to think about it: God has adopted us into his family, lots of different metaphors, God has

made us part of the temple of his people, God has brought us into his army, God has made us soldiers in his army and what you and I need to understand and embrace because there is a vast reservoir of courage to be found in what I'm about to say here, this is the day for which God has created us. God has made us, has made you and me in all of our weakness, in all of our inabilities, God has made us for precisely such a time as this. If we were not the people that were designed to fight this battle on behalf of Christ, he would not have appointed us for it. This is our hour. This is our day. This is our moment in which God has appointed us to live for his glory and to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might in the midst of everything that is happening around us.

And so that means that you and I have to put away the grumbling about the situation, we have to put away our fear, we have to put away the selfishness that says, "I'm not going to engage if it can't be my way," we have to put all of that aside because it's utterly irrelevant to the central theme of it all which is how are we going to glorify God in this time, how are we going to honor him, and it is not going to be found in people who run and hide. So we need a mindset that will gird us for what lies ahead and we have to embrace the fact that we may be in a small minority as we do. This has been the condition, this has been the challenge for the Christian church throughout all of time so why should it be any different for us? The fact that we're in a minority is a good sign because Scripture, Jesus himself said that the way is broad that leads to destruction and many people go down it. The way is small, the gate is narrow that leads to life and few are those who find it. Well, that helps me, that strengthens me to think that, "Okay, I'm in a minority. That's actually a good sign here. That's a cause for courage. This is a path that leads to life. I'm not comfortable being in the majority with the world. That's not a good sign at all." But the fact that we're in the minority means that we're in the battle.

So what do you do? Point #1 tonight: you take your position. You take your position. Godly living requires strength that goes far beyond human ability. We start with the premise, beloved, we start with the presupposition that we don't have the strength in our human ability for a battle like this. We start there. We acknowledge that. God says that he perfects his strength in our weakness, not apart from it. And so look at verse 10 with me. He says,

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

Now a couple of things to observe about this. This is a command. We are under obligation from our sovereign Lord in light of this text of Scripture, that in precisely a time like this we are to be strong. We are to manifest strength and it is a command that implies that it is an ongoing command; that this is what is to characterize, the pattern of Christian life is one that is a matter of strength in the Lord.

Now just to draw that out a little bit. God is going to call us to account for how we respond to this command. God is going to hold you and me accountable for the way in which we draw upon Christ as the consistent pattern of our life. We are to be strong, not weak. We are to be men and women of valor, not cowards. I want to say that again. We are to be men and women of valor, not cowards in the face of the conflict.

Now there are those teachers over the recent past 10-20 years, those that were associated with the Emergent Church and all of its sad offspring, there were teachers and they're still around today, that like to parade before their audiences their sin. They'll talk openly about how they've sinned and now they're in a position for them to be able to identify with other sinners, as if a doctor needs to have terminal cancer in order to be able to help a patient. It's foolishness. Others like to talk about their doubts about God or their doubts about Scripture, or to ask questions that cause you to undermine your confidence in the word of God, which is exactly the pattern that Satan followed in Genesis 3. They talk about their doubts and their sins and that's what they spend their time talking about, the idea being that the authenticity supposedly connects with their audience.

I remember going to a service a few years ago at Crossroads Community Church and that is exactly what the woman teacher did. She talked about her adulterous lifestyle that she had been living a few years back before, you know, whatever changes took place in her life. Thirty minute messages, 20 minutes was about, 20 minutes of it was about her adulterous past. Now look, beloved, you cannot reconcile that approach to ministry, you know, I'm not even dealing with the matter that a woman shouldn't be preaching, that's a different story altogether, you cannot reconcile that approach to so-called ministry with this command of Ephesians 6, "Be strong in the Lord. Be in the strength of His might." What that kind of teaching does, what that kind of glorifying of past sin does is it injects confusion and weakness into the audience instead. It teaches them that sin is actually not so serious after all, holiness is not such a great virtue to pursue after all, repentance is not that important. All of that is desperately wrong, desperately mistaken.

Let's bring it a little closer to home. Let's bring it inside the room here and I'm not, again, I'm going to try to be careful to say things like this so that it doesn't cause anyone to stumble, even within our own walls it's easy for some Christians, some professing Christians, it's easy for them to excuse their own unfaithfulness to Bible reading, Bible study, their unfaithfulness in prayer, their unfaithfulness in meeting with the people of God, and to just pile up excuses for why that's not feasible for them in their current state of life. "You don't know what kind of schedule I've got. I've got these other activities going on. Well, life is just hard. Well, you know what? I'm really not a reader." And there's just all of these excuses given that in essence are glorifying mediocrity and with the result that people like this without consciously doing it, they redefine faithfulness to Christ in daily life as legalism. Well, whether we see this from the big picture outside or whether we see it in the micro-picture inside, what I want to invite you to, call you to in light of this text is for you to simply resolve in your mind, "It's not gonna be that way with me. Going forward, I want to leave that behind. To the extent that that's true of me in the past, true of me today, Lord, I repent. I turn away from that. I recognize that there is a spiritual battle going on and, Lord, I want to adopt the mindset in my mind that I am going to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might." In other words, beloved, what this text does for you and me is it calls us to rise to this command and to embrace it, and what it is, is this is ultimately this is a call to draw upon our Lord Jesus Christ.

Look at the text here. "Be strong in the Lord. Be strong in the strength of His might." You see, this is a call, this is telling us where the sphere of our strength is to be found. We remember who our Lord is and we remember what he has done, and we remember what he has given to us, and this is the sphere in which we find our power and our strength. Now down the road it'll be maybe two or three weeks before we get to these terms in the text but I'm too eager to introduce them right now, where is the realm of our strength in the Lord? Well, I'm gonna give you three R's for now and we'll find those in about three weeks or so.

First of all, it is in the revelation of Christ. It is in his revelation. It is in the word written in the 66 books and no more of the Bible. And it is in the person of Jesus Christ himself, the Word Incarnate. Christ has revealed God to us in human flesh. God has revealed himself to us in his word, that word which is able to make the man of God adequate, equipped for every good work, 2 Timothy 3:16. We have a sufficient provision in the word of God.

More than that, we have the righteousness of Christ. We have the righteousness of Christ. "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him," 2 Corinthians 5:21. And the reason, one way in which that is so important for us to understand is that when God saved you, he imputed to you the perfect righteousness of Christ. And what does that mean, why is that of consequence in this context of being strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might? It means that you are able to draw upon the resources of Christ, you are able to find access to God in prayer on the strength of a perfect standing that is based on a righteousness that is not your own. Because the righteousness of Christ has been freely given to you as a gift of grace in your salvation, you have bold and confident access to the God who says the effective prayer of a righteous man accomplished much. We are secure in him. God has accepted us. God has received us into his family, into his army, to carry out the metaphor. And because we are accepted in the righteousness of Christ, then our position, our framework of thinking about this is one of unconquerable courage and nobility that says in the language of the Apostle Paul in Romans 8, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" You guys in the world, you are wasting your time fighting against the church of Christ. You false teachers who are introducing the social gospel because it is the wave of the present right now, you're wasting your time. It will become of nothing, we say as the people who are relying on the righteousness of Christ and not our own works and our own merit to give us position with God. The righteousness of Christ imputed to us gives us great strength and great confidence, and when you understand the source of your strength, then you're going to be strong in the battle.

There's a final aspect of it, the third R and that is the reconciliation with Christ, let's say. Reconciliation with Christ, that you and I despite our many sins and transgressions both in the past and still in the innumerable ways that we fall short, God has reconciled us to himself and his Son. God has accepted us in the Beloved. The blood of his Son cleanses us from all sin so that we are not hindered by a guilty conscience because our conscience has been cleansed because God has accepted us for the sake of his Son. Jesus Christ has acted as a mediator for all those who put their faith in him, reconciling sinful man to a

holy God having borne all of our sins in his body on the cross. Buried them, carried them far away into the depths of the sea, Scripture says, and came out in newness of life from the grave resurrected and we share in that resurrected glory.

And so we take our position with a mindset of Christian truth that is based on biblical doctrine and it is in that that we find our strength for the hour. And how strong is Christ? Well, Paul has talked about it earlier in Ephesians. Look at Ephesians 1:18. There is power and there is this great love with which our Father accepts us in his Son. The power in verse 18, the Apostle Paul says, "I pray that the eyes of your heart would be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe." How great is that power? Well, it is in accordance with the working of the strength of his might. Do you see the verbal parallel between chapter 1 and chapter 6? Chapter 6 said, "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might." Well, here it says his power is in accordance with the working of the strength of his might. And what is that power? Nothing less than the resurrection of Christ. Verse 20, he displayed that power when "He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion." God raised Christ from the dead, God exalted him to heaven at the right hand of the Father, and the power that overcomes death is supernatural, the power which energized the ascension and enthroned Christ for his ongoing session now at the right hand of God, that's great supernatural power. And the powers and dominions and the rule and the authority of all of the demonic host could not stop it. And the point, then, for us to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might is to realize and understand and rely upon, trust in, be confident in, be convinced of the reality that the power that did that for Christ is the same power that is at work in us, enabling us for the hour at hand. That's the way that we draw upon the strength of Christ and in his power.

Look at Ephesians 3:14. Paul was a praying apostle. Paul praying chapter 3, verse 14 said, "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name," verse 16, "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." He says, "I'm asking God to activate, to further, to enhance the work of His Holy Spirit who indwells you in the inner man so that Christ would dwell in your hearts through faith, and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God."

Beloved, here we are in the midst of a supernatural battle, Satan and all the demonic hosts arrayed against us, far more powerful than us, wicked, destructive, sadistic in all of their designs and their past battles littered with successes of people that they have overcome, and we look at this and say, "How am I to overcome that? How am I to stand against that?" Well, you are to stand against that, indeed you're commanded to stand against that in the strength of the Lord in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

Understand that the prior context of Ephesians has taught us that that is a position of power and a position of love. Resurrection power at work in you and in the church, and not just power but this wonderful, amazing love of God with which he has accepted us in the Beloved, and he has poured out all of the riches of his blessings upon us, he has advanced our interests, he has secured our interest in his Son, and he promises as in Philippians 1, that what he has begun in us he will most certainly complete, so that in Romans 8 language, there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now I ask you: why would we want to engage our time in grumbling and complaining, why would we think that the power for our victory comes in who wins the next election, why would we run from the people of God in their time of need when that kind of power and that kind of love is actuated and at work within us? Why would we do that? Why would we run? Why would we be afraid no matter what happens? That, beloved, is the command upon our lives, it is for us to recognize that Christ empowers us to live a godly life to the glory of God, and that Christ has already empowered us in that way. He has empowered us and he continues to work that power out within us. Now look, I want to tell you, that is the only way that there is confidence to overcome what's all around us these days.

Look at verse 11 where he says,

11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

It pictures the complete equipment that a Roman soldier took into battle that was designed to secure his well-being in the midst of a fight against a powerful foe. We will unfold those things in the weeks to come. For now I just want you to see this, is that God commands you in his word, he commands you in Scripture to contemplate, to meditate on the things that we were just considering, resurrection power, crucifixion love, reconciliation, revelation, righteousness, and to realize that all of those spiritual assets, for lack of a better word, all of those spiritual gifts have been deposited in your account, have been placed within you in the indwelling Holy Spirit, and you recognize that and you say, "I am not afraid of what's around me. I will live to the glory of God without fear and with confidence." Paul says when he says put on the full armor of God, in essence he's saying to drop the metaphor, take the resources that God has given to you and use them to succeed in your spiritual life. I'll say it again. Paul said in Philippians 3, I'll repeat myself. It's no problem for me to say the same things again to you because it's a safeguard for you. Take the resources that God has given to you in Christ and use them to succeed in your spiritual life.

In 1 Thessalonians 5, you can turn there with me for just a moment, Paul uses this and this is a much lesser known text with the armor of God imagery. He says in verse 8 of 1 Thessalonians 5, "since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that

whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him." What's the outcome of this to be? What is the corporate effect of that to be within the church? "Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing." Those of you that are here tonight, that is exactly what you are doing. You are fulfilling the command of God to encourage one another in the resources that Christ has given us and we need one another for that to take place and I'm grateful that you're here.

But my friends, think with me for just a moment here. God has provided all of these resources and yet he commands us to put on the armor of God. That means that you and I have to exert ourselves in this process. We have to engage our minds. We have to think these things. We have to put away and turn away from the ungodly thoughts, the ungodly words, the ungodly actions. We have to turn away from the ungodly spirit of this age. We have to turn away from the examples of those who are contradicting this kind of exclusive trust in Christ and commit ourselves to it. You have to exert yourself on these things. Philippians 2 says, "work out your salvation with fear and trembling." This doesn't just automatically happen. You're commanded to draw upon this strength to know and trust in your position as one who has been supernaturally saved.

Now why is it so vital that we know our position? Why is it so vital to draw upon those resources? Well, our second point for tonight is that you need to know your opposition. You need to know your opposition. It would have been better if I had said the point know your position and know your opposition. That would have been a better way to do it homiletically but my opportunity passed me by. What a shame. We don't need to spend much time here on this, this evening, because it's what we've been talking about for the past couple of hours from the pulpit. You and I live for Christ in the midst of supernatural hostility.

Look at verse 11 with me in Ephesians 6. Ephesians 6:11, "Put on the full armor of God, so that," here's the purpose statement, "you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil." This will give you the ability to stand firm when the devil unleashes his warfare against you. And so we just say this, that as we've been saying, there is more to reality than what we experience with our physical senses. We not only walk by faith not by sight, we realize by faith that the realm of opposition is one that we do not see; that we live for Christ in the midst of a spiritual realm populated with wicked forces that are actively opposed to Christ and Christians who live for him, so that Satan deceives people with false teaching. As the social gospel gains ground, we see him at work. He obscures the truth of God from men. He harasses men with physical difficulties as he did with Job. He instills doubt in your weak and trembling heart. He tempts men to sin and unbelief. He creates conflict rather than peace. He draws men from God through the sensuality of their own lusts. And when I say Satan, I don't mean simply him individually but the whole demonic army that is under his command.

Scripture emphasizes this. The Apostle Peter said in chapter 5 of his first epistle, "Be of sober spirit. Be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour." If you were to meet a lion robbed of her cubs and you were the suspect in her estimation, the fury of that lion unleashed against you would be horrific

and terrifying. This is the picture that is used of the way that Satan goes after the people of God and so we need to recognize this. Pastor Kent Hughes for a long time in Wheaton, Illinois said this, he said, "Satan is immensely powerful, imitating God's power and presence with his demonic hosts. He is evil beyond our comprehension and without conscience or principle. He is diabolically cunning and he is after us."

And so, beloved, this is not the word, I'm not speaking here as an alarmist in what I'm saying here tonight. This is simply the teaching of the word of God. Eve, Job, Peter, Paul, Christ, these were real people in time and space who were subject to assault from the devil and we walk in their path, as it were. And so we're not surprised, we're not surprised when a sudden battle comes upon us and that it's intense, and then another one comes, and then another one comes, and then another one comes. We're not surprised by that anymore. We're not afraid of that anymore because Scripture has prepared us to expect it. We not only learn to expect it, we find further that God has prepared us in advance for such a battle as this; that he has given us all of these immense spiritual resources, these infinitely valuable resources in our Lord Jesus Christ, in his revelation, in his righteousness, in the reconciliation that we have in him, and we realize that God has thoroughly equipped us for a battle such as this, and we recognize that our Christian life is not at all preeminently about our comfort, our prosperity, for God simply helping us with our little problems, we are part of a cosmic conflict which at stake is the glory of God. And it's because, beloved, it is because we love Christ for what he has done for us, we love him for taking the initiative to save our sinful wretched souls, we love him, we're grateful to him, so much so that we want to see his name honored in every possible way and that is the most important priority that we have in life. We want to see him high and lifted up. We want to see him glorified and exalted in the eyes of men and in the eyes of angels, and we get to be an instrument by which that happens. We get to contribute our voice to the hallelujah chorus.

So it's not about you. It's not about me. It's not about us ultimately. It's about the great purpose of the universe to be a vessel of displaying the glory of God. That's why you and I must be strong in the Lord, for the sake of his glory. We're too weak to do it on our own and so we can only walk in this manner worthy of Christ by drawing upon him himself. So we confess openly, gladly, our spiritual inability. We confess our need for the consistent presence of Christ mediated to us by the Holy Spirit. And in that, beloved, we just come to this point, you know, we need to know our position, we know what our opposition is, we know the resources that have been provided for us, and it brings you and me to a point of decision in our mindset in terms of how we live life going forward. Beloved, no more excuses for mediocrity. You have the armor of God if you are in Christ. It's time for strength against the foe.

Let's pray together.

God, we simply ask You to fulfill this in us. You having made us, You having appointed the hour in which we live, You have given us all of these wonderful resources in our Lord Jesus Christ. Father, we embrace the command and we ask by Your Spirit that You would make us strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Help us ever to draw

upon that resurrection power that dwells within us that raised Christ from the dead and makes us sufficient for the battle. Father, may we ever draw upon the sweetness and the certainty of Your love for us, that no one will separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Father, this can only come out good for us in the end. Let us manifest the glory of our Lord by believing that now and being strong against the foe. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

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