

In coming to v10, we come to the final section of this book. Having laid a doctrinal foundation in chapters 1-3, and having addressed the church (4:1—5:21), and home (5:33—6:9), Paul now ends with spiritual warfare (6:10-20). I suggest the reason he places this last is because we will face our spiritual enemies in the church and home. And thus, Paul begins this final section with the word "Finally, my brethren." This means, "in the last place." "Having addressed your duties in the church and home, I now close my letter with a reminder of your spiritual warfare."

Verses 10-20 is the fullest treatment of spiritual warfare in Holy Scripture. Paul first described the source of our strength (v10), the nature of our enemies (vv11-13), and the provision of God's armor (vv14-20).

- I. What is it to be Strong in the Lord?
- II. How are we to be Strong in the Lord?
- III. Why should we be Strong in the Lord?

I. What is it to be Strong in the Lord?

1. As Paul exhorts believers to be strong in the Lord I want to begin with the question, what does this actually look like?
2. How might a person know whether or not they are "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might?"
3. Perhaps we can view this as a spiritual checkup—an attempt to know the present spiritual condition of our soul.
4. Are we being made strong in the Lord, or else, are we spiritually weak and sick—what does spiritual strength look like?
5. (1) It doesn't deny strong temptations and enticements—a person can be strong in grace and experience great temptations.
6. This can be illustrated throughout Scripture—Abraham, Moses, David and Peter all faced strong temptations.
7. But I think the best example would be Job, who experienced great temptations even though he was righteous.
8. In fact, though Job was strong in grace, one reason he faces such temptation was to strengthen him further.
9. (2) It doesn't merely refer to strength of gift or knowledge—a person can have great gifts but little grace.
10. For example, think of two preachers—the first preaches flawless sermons that exemplify great knowledge.
11. The second, lacks any great oratory skills and may not have the learning or education of the first preacher.
12. And yet, after time it's revealed that the first preacher was a hypocrite as for years he was an adulterer.
13. Now if all you had to judge by were the sermons, you would likely think the first was strong and second weak.

14. (3) It's to have ability to subdue and mortify gross lusts and sins—strong (healthy) Christians live holy lives.
15. This of course doesn't mean they live sinless lives, but they are able by God's grace to obey God's law.
16. Thus, any person who consistently falls back into gross sins is obviously not a strong and healthy Christian.
17. (4) It's to have resolve and courage to trust God regardless of circumstances—a strong Christian is a tried Christian.
18. They've been through the regular storms and trials of life and they've learned to trust God through them.
19. Let me close this first point with three brief clarifications: (a) no Christian is ever strong in himself (our strength comes from Christ).
20. (b) No Christian ever thinks of himself as strong—that is, if asked he would be quick to describe himself as weak.
21. (c) No Christian is ever so strong that he cannot become stronger—we never come to a place of arrival.
22. Thus, our text comes to us all and says—"Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might"—regardless of who we are or where we're at spiritually (if you are young or old, sick or healthy, weak or strong).

II. How are we to be Strong in the Lord?

1. Here I want to come more directly to our text wherein Paul exhorts the Ephesians to be strong in the Lord.
2. But before I actually come to the question "how we are to be strong in the Lord" I want to first point out of the obvious, we are to be strong in the Lord.
3. In other words, our text is a command—"Be strong in the Lord"—it's not a suggestion or recommendation.
4. And so by way of introduction to this second main heading, I want to briefly explain the verse under two points.
5. (a) Activity—the phrase "be strong" is an imperative which means it's a command—we must be strong.
6. Now brethren, if Scripture teaches us anything it teaches Christians are far from passive in sanctification.
7. And this has been a perspective that many Christians have fallen prey to—we have to "Let go and let God."
8. But dear brethren, this is not the teaching of Scripture (and it's not the teaching of this book or this text).
9. Thus, here I want to quickly examine a few other passages that describe the need for vigorous activity (**1Cor.9:24-27; Phil.3:12-14**).
10. Brethren notice how often Paul used the pronoun "I"—Paul ran, fought, disciplined his body, and pressed on.

11. (b) Dependence—if our text merely exhorted us to "be strong" without adding the phrase "in the Lord" it would terribly discouraging.
12. Paul doesn't merely exhort us to be strong, but clarifies, we are to be strong "in the Lord and the power of His might."
13. The phrase "in the Lord" is a favorite of Paul's and refers to our personal union with Jesus Christ by faith.
14. It's as if Christ was a treasury filled with grace and Christians are to find all of their strength in Him.
15. Paul uses three similar words to make his point—strong, power, and might—these are basically synonymous.
16. Thus, while Christians are to be strong, they are to find their strength not in themselves but in Christ.
17. Eph.3:14-16—"For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man."
18. Notice two things: first, Christians are strengthened from the riches of God's grace as found in Christ Jesus; second, these riches are communicated to Christians by the ministry of the Holy Spirit (the Spirit communicates grace from Christ to our inner man).
19. The Spirit does this through means such as the word of God and prayer (thus, Paul described Scripture as 'the word of His grace' and he said of prayer, 'let us come to the throne of grace that we might find grace').
20. Both of these are true—we are to be strong but we are to be strong in the Lord and the power of His might.
21. Now admittedly, the two concepts of activity and dependence may difficult to harmonize in our thinking (but both true and both are equally important).
22. Thus, I want to take a few minutes and look at some classic texts that wed these truths together (**Ps.18:37-38; Zech.10:12; Phil.2:12-13; 4:13; Col.1:28-29**).
23. William Hendriksen—"These two elements—divine grace and human responsibility—are again most beautifully combined in this closing section. Man must equip himself with a full suit of arms, that is, it is he who must put it on. It is also he, he alone, who must use this entire armor. Nevertheless, the weapons are called 'the full armor of God.' It is God who has forged them. It is God who gives them. Not for one single moment is man able to employ them effectually except by the power of God."
24. This brings us more directly to the question—How are we to be strong in the Lord?—and let me begin by saying, our text obviously doesn't provide five ways to be strong in the Lord – but as we search the rest of Scripture we find these basic principles).
25. (1) Know your weakness—this is obviously where it starts—we must be totally convinced of our native weakness.
26. Why would we look for strength in Christ if we've deceived ourselves in thinking we have in ourselves.
27. In fact, how much strength we find in Christ will be in direct proportion to how much weakness we find in ourselves.
28. This is the beauty of the Christian religion—it never tells us to be better, smarter, or stronger in ourselves.

29. But to the very opposite, it everywhere exhorts us to humble ourselves before God as helpless and weak.
30. Isa.40:29-31—"He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail, but those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary."
31. 2Cor.12:9—"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness...v10 For when I am weak, then I am strong (Jn.15:5)."
32. John Calvin—"We must feel our faintness and poverty, that the saying of Paul, The Power of God is made perfect in our weakness may be fulfilled; for if our hearts are not deeply moved by a conviction of our weakness, we cannot receive seasonable assistance from God."
33. MLJ—"If you feel you are a very strong Christian, let me ask you why you have failed so much and why you still fail? What happens to your resolutions and resolves? Why do you so often find yourself in the place of repentance? Why are you sometimes attacked with feelings of utter hopelessness and almost despair? To what is it due? It is all due to the plain fact of our weakness, it is because we are insufficient and fallible."
34. (2) Know Christ's strength—we must not only know our weakness, but we need to know His strength.
35. Thomas Manton—"A Christian is to have a double eye, one upon God and the other upon Himself; upon himself in order to be reminded of his own weakness, and upon God in order to be convinced of His all-sufficient power."
36. To be merely convinced of our weakness without also beholding His power would simply lead to despair.
37. Ps.24:8—"Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle (29:1)."
38. Thus, if any of us are ever to know the power and strength of Christ, we must behold Him with the eyes of faith.
39. We need to be convicted of the abundant power that we have in Christ to defeat everyone of our enemies.
40. 1Jn.4:4—"You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."
41. John here contrasts the spirit of the Antichrist and the Spirit of God—one was in the world and the other in them.
42. They were not deceived by the false prophets because the Spirit in them was stronger than the spirit in them.
43. Dear brethren, while the spirit of the antichrist is too strong for us, he is no match for the Spirit of God.
44. Thus, we need to be truly convinced of this—the power of Christ is able to keep me from any temptation.
45. It's sufficient enough to enable every Christian to mortify ever lust and walk in harmony to God's law.

46. Let me illustrate, several years ago I used to work in a warehouse and often had to move large and heavy pallets.
47. While the pallets were far too heavy for me to move in my own strength, thankfully a forklift was provided.
48. And so, I not only needed to be convinced of my own weakness and inability but also the forklift's ability.
49. (3) Know Christ's heart—by this I mean, we must not only be convinced of His ability but willingness to give us strength ('if you being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him').
50. We must not only be convinced of His mighty power but also His loving heart (that He delights in giving strength to His people).
51. (a) Think of the intimate relationship He sustains to them—they are His beloved bride, body, and brethren.
52. (b) Think of the many promises He's made to them—these are intended to remove all doubt of His love.
53. Joshua 1:9—"Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."
54. Matthew 28:19-20—"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen"
55. (4) Cry to God for strength—prayer is the primary means through strength is conveyed to a needy soul.
56. A.N. Martin—"God has ordained that prayer be the means in which we exchange our weakness for His strength."
57. A.W. Pink—"Prayer is not so much an act as it is an attitude—an attitude of dependency, dependency upon God. Prayer is a confession of creature weakness, yea, of helplessness. Prayer is the acknowledgement of our need and the spreading it out before God."
58. Psalm 86:16—"Turn to me, and be gracious to me; Oh grant Your strength to Your servant" Ps.105:4—"Seek the Lord and His strength; seek His face continually" Ps.138:3—"In the day when I cried out, You answered me, and made me bold with strength in my soul."
59. John Calvin—"Paul exhorts them to be courageous, but at the same time reminds them to ask for God a supply of their own weaknesses, and promises that, in answer to their prayers, the power of God will be displayed."
60. (5) Work dependent upon grace—it's here that we come full circle—we must work knowing our weakness and His strength.
61. Go back to the illustration of the warehouse and forklift—you can stare at the forklift all day but not one pallet will get moved.
62. You have to climb into the machine and get to work not trusting in yourself but in the strength of the machine.
63. So too, every morning we must come from your bed to our knees and acknowledge our native weakness.

64. We must then look to Christ and His mighty power and strength, remembering His many promises to us.
65. Then we must humbly plead with Him that He would give us strength and wisdom to fight the good fight.
66. And then, we must diligently work and labor for His honor and glory and by His grace, power, and strength.
67. Isa.26:3-4—"You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. Trust in the LORD forever, for in Yah, the LORD, is everlasting strength" (Ps.16:8; Prov.3:5-6).

III. Why should we be Strong in the Lord?

1. Here I want to close our time by suggesting three motives to encourage us to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.
2. (1) There is work to do—dear brethren, remember our Savior has left us here to work while we wait.
3. Just think back to the previous chapters—we have church and domestic responsibilities that need doing.
4. Wives must submit husbands, husbands must love wives, children must obey parents, and parents must raise children.
5. And dear friends, where can we find the strength to do all these things? Surely not my looking within.
6. (2) There are enemies to face, v11-12—"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil."
7. Not only do we lack the strength needed to fulfill our duties but we have powerful forces against us.
8. And brethren, left to ourselves our enemies are too numerous and powerful for us to defeat in our own strength.
9. (3) There is glory to be given—the stronger we are the more work is done and more glory given to Christ.
10. Remember friends, ultimately speaking we fight for the honor and glory of our King who alone is worthy.
11. Usually the strength of kings lies in their army but in the case the strength of the army lies in their King.
12. Thus in the truest sense of the phrase we not only fight from Him (by His strength) but for Him (for His honor).