

## STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN THE POWER OF HIS MIGHT

### Ephesians 6:10-20

#### The Whole Armor of God

Finally, my brethren, **be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might**. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 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.

Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints— and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

"Ephesus was the capital city of a Roman province in Asia. Ephesus was a significant center of trade, located near a harbor at the mouth of the Cayster River in western Asia Minor. The city lay in a long, fertile valley. Major roads connected Ephesus to all the other significant cities in Asia Minor [what is present-day Turkey]. Ephesus was known for its amphitheater, the largest in the world, designed to hold up to 50,000 spectators. Ephesus was also the location of the great temple of Artemis, or Diana, built in 550 BC. This temple, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, was "425 ft. long and 220 ft. wide; each of its 127 pillars which supported the roof of its colonnade was 60 ft. high" (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia). Much Ephesian industry was related to this temple. Craftsmen sold shrines and household images of the goddess that worshipers could take with them on long journeys. The Ephesians were proud of their religious heritage and its accompanying legends (**Acts 19:35**)."<sup>1</sup> I got that information from gotquestions.org. I mention the culture and description of Ephesus for a reason. While Christians today may think of Ephesus as part of the early, growing, and thriving church in Christ Jesus, as we have Pauls' letter to the Ephesians, they are mentioned in the book of Acts, and it is one of the seven churches Jesus addressed in the book of Revelation. But, it also had a rich history in the occult, that was contrary to the God of the Bible, and therefore, outside of the church, as it had become

1 <https://www.gotquestions.org/Ephesus-in-the-Bible.html>

in Christ. Occult, by the way, is "anything pertaining to a system claiming knowledge to supernatural agencies."<sup>2</sup> But what I most wanted to stress in mentioning a bit of background on Ephesus is that there were plenty of distractions for those early followers of Christ and there was much going on in Ephesus to get God's people entangled in the affairs of that bustling city, full of commerce, and entertainment, and other religion that was contrary to the Word of God.

It is also interesting in comparing what Christ Jesus said to that church at Ephesus and the six other churches in Asia, as it was called at the time, and is now referred to as Asia Minor, which is most of what is the country of Turkey, and is recorded for us by the Apostle John in the first three chapters of Revelation, or the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Jesus introduces Himself and says this, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea." (**Revelation 1:11**) Jesus addressed first the church of Ephesus, saying "To the angel of the church of Ephesus write [presumed by Bible scholars to mean the pastors, the messengers of the gospel of Christ, yet the word *aggelos* usually means angel], 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: "I know your **works**, your **labor**, your **patience**, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars [you know one of the best ways to expose hypocrisy in others? By being the real deal]; and you have **persevered** and have **patience**, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love [that's Jesus, isn't it]. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent **and** do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent. But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." '

When Jesus stated, "I know your **works**, your **labor**, your **patience**", mentioning "works" can and should bring to mind what the Apostle Paul said in **Ephesians 2:8-10**, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are **His workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus **for good works**, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

We being God's workmanship in Christ Jesus brings forth the fruit of the Spirit of "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness,

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2 Random House Webster's Dictionary, Second Edition, 1996.

faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." (**Galatians 5:22-23**) "I know your works, your labor, your patience", that's Him working in us, right? It also means that one is depending on God, through Christ, as Paul mentioned in **1 Corinthians 1:30**, for His Wisdom, and Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption. The Ephesians were being reminded to, as Paul put it, to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ [and to] make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts." (**Romans 13:14**) Remembering one's first love is where it begins and ends for us as we are **always** to be "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (**Hebrews 12:2**) Putting on the Lord Jesus is depending on Christ Jesus to be, as He claimed, "The Way, the Truth, and the Life" and that "No one comes to the Father except through Me." (**John 14:6**) And then speaking of the fulfilling of lusts, Jesus said to the Ephesians, "But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate." "According to early church fathers (Ignatius, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Hippolytus), refers to those who, while professing themselves to be Christians, lived licentiously [sexually unrestrained]. What in Ephesus was "deeds" (v. 6) became in Pergamum a "doctrine"."<sup>3</sup> It was in Pergamos, by the way, that Jesus mentioned the seat of Satan being there. (**Revelation 2:13**)

What that means then is that the Nicolaitans were only following the doctrine of Christ that suited them and then also added their own spin to His doctrine according to their own lusts and desires. But we know that we, as children of God, that is, those who have believed on Christ and received Him, by being led to repentance from our sins are all called to live our new lives in Christ according to His doctrine, which is in the New Covenant we have in Christ. Just as the Apostle John pointed out, "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son." (**2 John 1:9**) What is the doctrine of Christ? Jesus tells us, "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (**Mark 12:30-31**) Jesus concluded in the Matthew account saying, "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

Yet none of us are perfect, right? That is why we are reminded, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (**1 John 1:9**) While we are not living our lives in Christ according to the law of Moses, the Old Covenant, we are following in the will and way that is in Christ Jesus. While it is then important to distinguish as to what is the doctrine of Christ, we are, simply put, living our lives

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3 Scofield Study Bible, pg. 1720.

according to the character of Christ, just as He was the express image or charakter [Greek] of God as was mentioned in **Hebrews 1:3** and then we are putting our trust in Him that He is "upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." It is us making that commitment and decision daily and even moment by moment to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, putting on the **whole armor of God** that is in Christ Jesus and is according to His Word and then putting our trust in Him that He is "upholding all things by the power of His Word", which includes us, as we are His workmanship. That is what our faith in Christ is, putting our trust in Him, from the beginning of our faith in Christ to when He takes us home to Glory!

"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 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." There are three key elements, that we looked at last week, to our faith in Christ to which we are responsible for. We have the Holy Spirit, that guides us into all truth, of which we must walk in obedience to, we have the Word of God that is the Truth, meaning we must know what God's Word actually says, and we have other people, that can encourage us and be praying for us, as we should also be encouraging and praying for them. We are indeed in a spiritual battle, which can be assumed to be the way that God has chosen to prepare us for His eternal plan, to learn to put our trust in Him, and that we are being tested by God in the circumstances and challenges that come our way.

As it has been helpful to me, I pass along to you, that God is perfect in all of His Ways (**2 Samuel 22:31**) and Works (**Deuteronomy 32:4**), so if there is a problem that is coming up against you, He is the One to go to, as Jesus upholds all things by the power of His Word. Yes, we are told in God's Word that He does indeed chastise and scourge those He loves, getting us all cleaned up and living in His holiness, so a question that can be asked is, "Are you correcting me Lord, or is this a spiritual battle?" Concerning others we cannot be their judge in determining whether they are a child of God that is in need of correction or is being corrected, or whether they are just "tares among the wheat", so to speak. "Stand therefore, having girded your waist with **truth**, having put on the breastplate of **righteousness**, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the **gospel of peace**; above all, taking the shield of **faith** with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of **salvation**, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the **Word of God**." Truth, righteousness, gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and the Word of God, all of that is found in Christ Jesus,

our Lord, God, and Savior. What separates us then from having on the whole armor of God is by not abiding in the Word (that is in Christ and His written Word) and by living in sin that brings about our separation from God. If one is living in sin and has not surrendered that sin to God you can be assured that God will try to correct you and then you will also begin getting attacked by the enemy of your soul as there is, euphemistically speaking, a gap in your armor, a weakness that can be exploited, and simply put, God hates sin. The end goal is what Paul told the Ephesians saying, "till we all come to the **unity of the faith** and of the **knowledge of the Son of God**, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of **Christ.**" That is, so that we are all being used by God in sharing and showing the love and the gospel of Jesus Christ, and being one in spirit and purpose in Christ. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." Not just to overcome the devil, for as we put our trust in Christ, He has already overcome the devil, and sin, evil, and death but we are God's workmanship which is all for glory of God. We can be reminded, as Jesus did to the Ephesians in **Revelation 2:4**, to not lose our first love, as we love God because He first loves us. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." (**Revelation 2:7**)

We are promised, as children of God, eternal life in Christ Jesus (**John 3:16-17**). We are promised that "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together." Joint-heirs with Jesus, who inherits all things, and we will be glorified together in Christ. As we continue to put our trust in God through Christ Jesus, it does get easier in the sense that He becomes us, in our patient continuance in well-doing, as Paul put it. His Way becomes more natural to us, and it becomes us to recognize that we can do all things (within the will of God) through Christ who gives us strength and that the joy of the Lord is our strength. "Being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints— and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak." May we all have it in us to be praying for one another and encouraging one another and to continue to share and show the love and the gospel of Christ Jesus, until He takes us home to glory! May we all then be of good courage, putting our wholehearted trust in God in Christ and be "strong IN THE LORD and in the POWER OF HIS MIGHT!" AMEN.