

“Be Strong in the Lord”  
Ephesians 6:10  
(Preached at Trinity, January 17, 2016)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As I reminded you last time, the Book of Ephesians was most likely written during Paul's Roman imprisonment. He is the prisoner of Nero, one of the cruelest of the Roman Emperors. Yet, Paul doesn't spend his time writing invectives against the Roman Empire. He doesn't spend his time talking about politics. He has a higher focus. He spends his time writing to strengthen and encourage the church. He maintained his focus upon the Gospel.
  - A. In the first three chapters Paul reminded them of the great fundamentals of the Christian faith.
    1. Of God's eternal plan for the redemption of His chosen people through the Lord Jesus Christ, by His great power through the Gospel.
    2. Of the condition of lost humanity and our great need for Divine mercy.
    3. Of God's reconciling grace wherein we being alienated from God have been united with the household of God built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone.
  - B. Paul concludes chapter 3 with an incredible prayer asking that the Ephesian believers might comprehend the incomprehensible - the magnitude of the love of Christ and that they might be filled with all the fullness of God who is able to do abundantly above what we may ask or think.
  - C. In chapter 4 Paul begins to lay out the Christian life –  
**Ephesians 4:1 NAU** - "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called"
  - D. Paul has been striving to declare the amazing transformation of the Christian life. It is a new life; a completely different life. But it isn't a life that we live passively. In second half of the epistle he is exhorting us to walk worthy of our calling. We are not what we were. So Paul is exhorting us to be what we are:  
You have been changed! Be what you are! You have no excuses!  
You are filled with the Holy Spirit. Walk worthy of your calling.  
Every area of life is changed; every relationship is transformed.  
There is now love, tolerance, patience
2. Now with **Verse 10** we come to a new section. We are still within the context of the high calling of the Christian life that Paul has been describing. Again it isn't a life that is lived passively. Rather we must be actively engaged.  
In **Verses 10-17** Paul is explaining that this Christian life is lived in the context of warfare. The Christian life is a terrible battle, a raging war that is powerful and relentless. There are organized spiritual forces fighting against you. In order to persevere in the Christian life, it is essential that you understand clearly this inward war and how to be the victor in it.
3. Paul begins this passage with a two-fold charge:  
First, he charges the Christian pilgrim, "Be strong."  
And second, he reminds the Christian of the source of his strength:  
"in the Lord and in the strength of His might."

## I. "Be strong"

A. The Christian soldier goes to battle with boldness, confidence, and strength. Paul is describing robust Christianity.

1. The Christian, of all people, needs to be strong and courageous. He needs to be a valiant warrior. But he must never fail to recognize the source of his strength.
2. Matthew Henry – "Religion tends to make men, not cowardly, but truly valiant. The righteous man is bold as a lion. The true Christian is the true hero." This is true of both men and women.
3. The Bible gives us many examples of men and women who stood upon the mighty power of God:
  - Noah boldly built the ark for 120 years while he was mocked daily
  - Abraham boldly left his homeland trusting the promises of God. At one point he took a mere 300 men and conquered four kings and their armies
  - Joshua fought valiantly, Caleb fought with courage.

God's charge to Joshua:  
**Joshua 1:9 NAU** - "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

  - Esther risked her life to defend her people  
**Esther 4:16 NAU** - "And thus I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish."
  - David stood boldly before his enemies
  - Jeremiah stood firm upon God's Word at great personal loss.

The list goes on and on
4. Paul was meek and gentle, yet when necessary he stood bold as a lion. Paul never backed down from any man. Not that he was never afraid.  
**1 Corinthians 2:3-4 NAU** - "I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, <sup>4</sup> and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power"

B. The Christian soldier must manifest strength and courage

1. This has always been expected of God's people  
**Psalm 31:24 NAU** - "Be strong and let your heart take courage, All you who hope in the LORD."
2. **Verse 10** is in the imperative. All of Scripture is "Thus saith the Lord" and carries infinite authority. It is all in command mode. But we must not miss the significance of the imperatives. Paul commands, "Be strong in the Lord"
3. Christianity is not for the faint of heart – We are commanded to count the cost. The Christian life is difficult!

- a. This was the teaching of Jesus  
**Luke 14:27-33 NAU** - "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. <sup>28</sup> "For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? <sup>29</sup> "Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, <sup>30</sup> saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' <sup>31</sup> "Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup> "Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. <sup>33</sup> "So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions."
- b. Paul's words to Timothy -  
**2 Timothy 2:3** – "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."
3. Our generation is marked by weakness, softness –  
 The opposite of "Be Strong"
  - a. You can hear it when difficulty comes – complaints and whining. Everyone today expects life to be free from difficulty. Most expect the government to provide.
  - b. 150 years ago they had no electricity, no AC, no TV  
 Limited pain relievers, no antibiotics, no cars or airplanes, no telephones, no supermarkets – lots of hard work.  
 Most worked 6 days a week resting on the Sabbath.  
 No one expected an easy life
4. Unfortunately, many Christians today have been influenced by our hedonistic society. We lust for pleasure – the good life. They see the church more as a playground than a place to equip for hard labor.
5. Christianity has never been described in this manner  
 Throughout history men and women have suffered greatly for their faith. Thousands and thousands of Christians have died simply because of their faith in Christ. They've endured every hardship in their service to Christ.
- C. Discipleship demands that we behave like men – with courage and boldness  
 (This applies also to ladies as it applies to the Christian life)
  1. **1 Corinthians 16:13 NAU** - " Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong."
  2. William Barclay – "As a sentinel, be ever on the alert. When under attack, stand fast in the faith, and yield not an inch. In time of battle, play a hero's part. Like a well-equipped and well trained soldier, be strong to fight for your King."
  3. We must stand our ground. We must overcome temptation. We must stand in opposition to all that would bring dishonor to our Lord. We must be resolved maintaining our integrity.  
 We must do what we know to be right to the honor of our God.
  4. We must be willing to step outside our comfort zone

II. What is the source of the Christian soldier's strength and confidence?

"in the Lord and in the strength of His might."

A. Our strength is not our own. We must give ourselves. We must labor, strive, fight – but it is not mere human strength.

1. Such strength does not come naturally

2. Paul never pretended that his strength was his own

He knew his weakness

**1 Corinthians 2:3 NAU** - "I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling,"

3. The man who marches forth in his own strength doesn't realize his own helplessness – he will be smitten with fear and then failure. The battle fought alone is the battle lost.

**James 4:6 NAS** - " But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

4. The Christian, of all people, needs to be strong and courageous. He needs to be a valiant warrior. But he must never fail to recognize the source of his strength. Our confidence is in Christ.

**Philippians 4:13 NAU** - "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."

B. First we have to understand that this strength is one of the Christian graces. In other words it is something God grants to His people as a token of His goodness.

**2 Timothy 2:1 NAU** - "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

**Isaiah 54:17 NAU** - "No weapon that is formed against you will prosper; And every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, And their vindication is from Me," declares the LORD."

"Heritage" – possession or inheritance

1. This strength isn't some abstract principle but something God has demonstrated over and over. He works mightily with infinite power on behalf of His people. He calls upon us to remember.

**Deuteronomy 5:15 NAU** - "You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to observe the sabbath day."

2. Paul has already described this power in **Chapter 1**

**Ephesians 1:19 NAU** - " what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might"

3. God imparts His strength to His people and then commands us to be bold and courageous.

The injunction here is in the imperative:

**Ephesians 6:10 NAU** - "be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might."

**Joshua 1:9 NAU** - "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

4. God often gives us the strength when we need it and not before.

**Luke 12:11-12 NAU** - "When they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not worry about how or what you are to speak in your defense, or what you are to say; <sup>12</sup> for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

5. We must strive with all our might. We must fight the good fight of faith. We must press on. We must be sober, vigilant. We must do all that we can do to stand firm.

**Ephesians 6:13 NAU** - "Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm."

6. But our strength is not our own. God gives us the strength when we need it  
**2 Corinthians 10:3-4 NAU** - "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, <sup>4</sup> for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses."

C. All of our spiritual strength comes only through the Lord Jesus Christ

1. Every grace of God is through the Lord Jesus Christ  
**Romans 8:37 KJV** – "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."
2. This spiritual strength is not a natural human inner strength. It is not self-sufficiency. It comes only through the grace that is in Christ Jesus  
We are made complete in Him – we are nothing without Him  
**John 15:5 NAU** - "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."
3. Paul continually affirmed that he was strong only through the Lord Jesus Christ.  
**2 Corinthians 12:10 NAU** - "Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong."

Conclusion:

1. The Christian soldier must be meek and gentle – We will not win our enemies by becoming like them.
2. The Christian soldier must also be courageous – We go forth with the infinite power of God. He will strengthen us to do His will. Our duty is to determine in our heart that we will do His will. That we will stand firm in the face of opposition. That we will honor our great King at any cost.
3. This whole section is describing the wonderful transformation of the Christian life. But it is all by grace – His mighty power working in us.  
**Ephesians 3:14-17 NAU** - " For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, <sup>16</sup> that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith"